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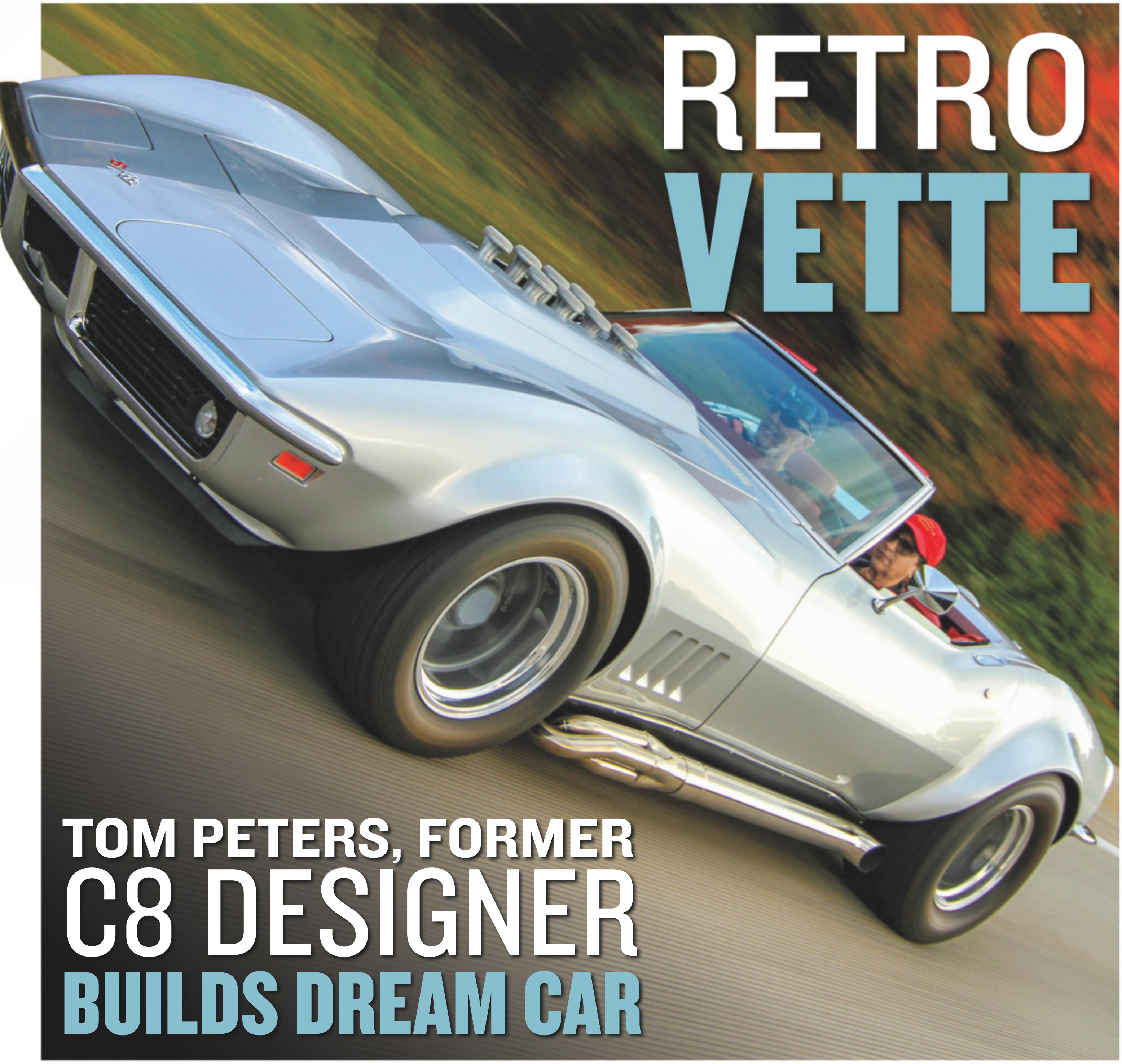

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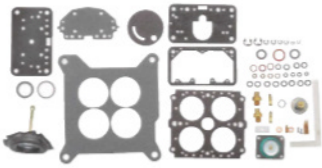

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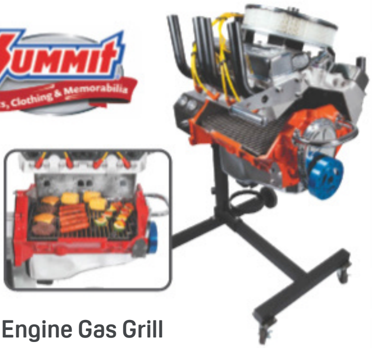

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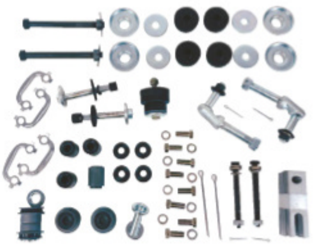

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Scrapper's Delight

I just got back from a week out in Southern California — my first trip out there in nearly a decade. The brief trip was enough for me to say I remain a fan, even after spending more than eight years battling the traffic and high cost of living while I was a resident. It's still a great place for anyone who enjoys old cars.

In fact, one of the things on my personal must-do list for the little bit of down time I had was to hit one of the many auto salvage yards in the region. When I lived out there in the late '90s/early 2000s, it was regular practice for me and many of the other gearhead magazine editors I worked with to comb the yards for parts and pieces that could be put to use on project cars, both our own and those that were coming together for articles.

Having come to SoCal from the Northeast, where I'd spent most of my life to that point, I was astounded by how many '60s and '70s vehicles were in those yards in the late '90s. Keep in mind, these places were vibrant businesses, processing salvage vehicles all the time — their inventories were always rotating. As I recall, vehicles tended to be set out for about a month to be picked over by patrons before the staff would take whatever was left to be scrapped.

The scrapping element was part of what made these places great for car enthusiasts. To the salvage yard, everything was just metal, glass, and plastic — they didn't care what kind of car the pieces came from, only what each piece was worth in terms of scrap value. So, for example, a fender from an '89 Ford Taurus cost the same as a fender from a '68 Mustang. Similarly, a '70 Pontiac 455 cost as much as a '81 Pontiac 301 — the person taking your money cared only that the parts were of the same type; enthusiast value didn't factor in.

> “The scrapping element was part of what made these places great for car enthusiasts.”

This created a sort of treasure hunt aspect for those of us perusing the aisles of propped up carcasses, and naturally, that's what I was hoping to relive when I had a few minutes to walk through one of those yards last week. But, as I'd feared, things have changed since I moved back east in 2006. From what I saw last week, the bulk of the rows are now made up of clapped-out front-drive cars, and a lot more of them are imports today. There were also countless examples of '90s SUVs, mostly of the soccer mom variety rather than more rugged off-road types. Much of what was in that yard were just transportation modules that seemed to have little hardware to contribute to a project vehicle today.

Back during my time living in SoCal, even many of the cars we'd have considered “boring” could be useful at times. There were always plenty of four-door Cutlasses, LeSabres, and the like with overdrive automatic transmissions that made great swap items. Caprices with tall spindles to use on older muscle-era A-bodies. Lincolns with roller-cam 5.0 engines and disc-brake upgrade bits for Fox-era Mustangs. Dodge trucks with 360 engines. This was all in addition to the older cars that had even more desirable items to give up.

But what I discovered last week was to be expected. Those high-volume junkyards reflect the automotive population of a given time, and that time is usually about 20 years in the past. So, whatever is languishing forlornly for parts pickers today represents what was commonly found on the road a couple decades prior. In Southern California, it wouldn't have been unusual to see cars of the '60s still roaming the freeways and boulevards in 1978, 20 years before I landed at LAX with a one-way ticket. A look back 20 years from today lands right in the midst of the time I was motoring around those same freeways and boulevards, back when cars of the late '80s and early '90s were prevalent.

While I was a bit disappointed with today's selection, as I meandered amongst the soon-to-be scrap, I recalled that, during those late-'90s treasure hunts, a couple of my coworkers who'd grown up in SoCal would lament how there was nothing “cool” left in those yards. They'd regale us with tales of finding legit muscle cars among the junkers back in the late '80s, and all the desirable engines, transmissions, rear axles, and so on, that they'd score for cheap.

By the late '90s, the original muscle cars were no longer turning up in the junkyard, but to a newly arrived rust-belter like me, the selection looked fantastic, and I recall pointing out to some of the other guys the useful items that could be found on '80s cars.

Remembering that made me consider what was in front of me last week. With all those vehicles, there had to be something useful…right? Then I found a GMC Yukon from the early 2000s, its 6.0-liter LS-type engine still between the frame rails. Another Chevy pickup of the same era had a 4L60E transmission ready to be plucked. A wrecked Charger police car had a 5.7 Gen III Hemi, and a Mercury Mountaineer had its high-output 5.0 small-block. There were Crown Vics, Dodge Hemi pickups, and some other semi-interesting later-model items as well.

So, while time marches on, the junkyards may still hold some bits of gold for anyone with a creative hot rodder's mindset. And they're still great places to spend some time and do a little shopping. ■

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It was a perfect late autumn day in the northern Rockies. Not a cloud in the sky, and just enough cool in the air to stir up nostalgic memories of my trip into the backwoods. This year, though, was different. I was going it solo. My two buddies, pleading work responsibilities, backed out at the last minute. So, armed with my trusty knife, I set out for adventure.

Well, what I found was a whole lot of trouble. As in 8 feet and 800-pounds of trouble in the form of a grizzly bear. Seems this grumpy fella was out looking for some adventure too. Mr. Grizzly saw me, stood up to his entire 8 feet of ferocity and let out a roar that made my blood turn to ice and my hair stand up. Unsnapping my leather sheath, I felt for my hefty, trusty knife and felt emboldened. I then showed the massive grizzly over 6 inches of 420 surgical grade stainless steel, raised my hands and yelled, “Whoa bear! Whoa bear!” I must have made my point, as he gave me an almost admiring grunt before turning tail and heading back into the woods.

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I was pretty shaken, but otherwise fine. Once the adrenaline high subsided, I decided I had some work to do back home too. That was more than enough adventure for one day.

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By Evan J. Smith

FORD

2024 MUSTANG HORSEPOWER NUMBERS ANNOUNCED

FORD'S SEVENTH-GENERATION PONY CAR PACKS MORE POWER

It's the announcement Mustang lovers have been waiting for: Ford just released the horsepower and torque figures for the 2024 lineup—and the news is good. Output continues to increase and blue oval enthusiasts have a lot to be excited about with the the seventh-generation 2024 Mustang, dubbed S650.

"Mustang has always pushed the envelope. From Mustang GT to Dark Horse, this is our best 5.0-liter V-8 yet. It's naturally aspirated awesomeness," Ed Krenz, Mustang chief engineer, says. "And Mustang EcoBoost fans are also getting a boost in power to make every Mustang more fun and visceral to drive."

New to the Mustang party is the 2024 Dark Horse, a pony Ford announced a few months ago designed to push the limits of handling and on-track performance. Ford speculated on the output, but now we know the deal: Under the hood will live a fourth-generation Coyote V-8 producing 500 horsepower and 418 lb-ft of torque. Next to the Shelby GT350, this is the most powerful naturally aspirated V-8 ever built by Ford. "This engine sets a new benchmark for Mustang street and track performance," Krenz adds. In fact, it wasn't that long ago when Ford revealed the supercharged 5.4 L 2007 Shelby GT500 with 500 horsepower. Now we have a 5.0 L engine making the same power without the blower.

Speaking of the Coyote, prior to the Dark Horse, the highest rated 5.0-L engine had been offered in the Bullitt and Mach 1, rated at 480 hp. Improvements on the Dark Horse come by way of a uniquely balanced cross-plane crankshaft, forged pistons, and connecting rods that are borrowed from the 760-horsepower Ford Mustang Shelby GT500. Krenz says the piston/rod combo can handle higher cylinder pressures and piston speeds, which are necessary for higher power and engine longevity. The Mustang Dark Horse V-8 also utilizes strengthened camshafts for track-durability needs and can safely be revved to a 7,500-rpm redline.

Despite rumblings of the V-8 going away, Ford continues to develop the base Mustang GT engine. You may recall that the 5.0 Coyote, which was introduced in 2011, produced 412 horsepower, and that number climbed to 460 in the GT as of 2023.

The 2024 Mustang GT will be sold with a 480-hp (415 lb-ft of torque) 5.0 L, which is the most ever for the GT; however, the optional active-valve performance exhaust system enables the Mustang GT coupe and convertible to deliver 486 horsepower and 418 lb-ft. of torque.

Better breathing is not restricted to the exhaust, as the fourth-generation Coyote V-8 is now fitted with a dual-throttle body induction system matched with structural improvements and an upgraded oil pan. "The intake helps minimize induction loss by enabling higher air flow rates," Krenz says.

Performance-minded owners have also embraced the EcoBoost, which eliminates weight on the nose and offers a 300-plus horsepower option. The all-new 2024 Mustang EcoBoost delivers with an upgraded 2.3-L EcoBoost engine that produces 315 horsepower, the most standard power in a four- or six-cylinder Mustang ever. In addition, the engine delivers 350 lb-ft of torque.

Like the GT, Mustang EcoBoost also offers the optional active-valve performance exhaust system designed for even more excitement from its turbocharged soundtrack. The Mustang EcoBoost coupe and convertible feature an engine that is new from the ground up, incorporating Ford's new Modular Power Cylinder (MPC) engine architecture, targeted to improve EPA-estimated fuel economy over the outgoing model year.

Ford changed the bore-to-stroke ratio, and added port fuel injection in addition to direct injection. Variable cam timing, integrated exhaust gas recirculation, and twin-scroll turbocharging technologies combine to deliver the performance Mustang drivers expect. Ford expects 2024 Mustang coupe and convertible models go on sale in the U.S. starting in the summer of 2023. ■

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Letter of the Month: **Rumblegutz and Rusty**

I had just come in from helping a neighbor change a tensioner pulley, and my wife of 33 years dropped the mail in front of me. *Hemmings Muscle Machines*—nice!

Nice scoop on the Torino on the cover. In 1969 I was working in a Ford parts department and had one of those scoops bolted to the hood of my '56 Chevy.

Then I glanced down to see green print: "BIG-BLOCK BIZ." I love big-blocks. Next line, "'68"—my heart rate jumps. "427"—I start to mumble strange noises. "BISCAYNE"—I placed both feet carefully under me and settled into my chair. I flipped the magazine open and there it is! I love those big-inch big cars! And not just reading and dreaming about them—there is one in my barn!

In 1969 my father came to me, a 19-year-old, and agreed to help me buy a "good" car. I was and still am a motorhead! My mom and dad were afraid I would buy a 'Vette, GTO, or 'Cuda and kill myself.

What I did was take NHRA rule book with class power-to-weight ratios to different car lots while doing the math. I selected a 1968 Bel Air (same sheetmetal and glass as the Biscayne) with a 250-cu.in. six and three-on-the-tree. The next weekend I brought home the first-place trophy for T/Stock stick! I raced it for two years. Then life happened.

In 2018 I found myself getting ready to retire to northeast Ohio from eastern Oklahoma. I figured if I was going to ever have another car like that, I had better find the body down south.

I found the car online, pulled a 454 from a junkyard, and found a transmission—I don't remember where the first one came from. I pieced it together and started hauling it to car shows.

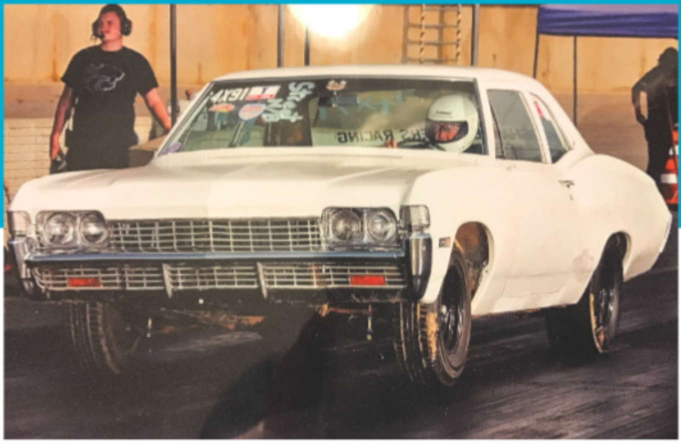
Two of the few new parts I used were the "427" emblems I put on the front fenders. It was evolving slowly into a 427 clone, a trailer-riding clunker. Then I moved.

After a year of being a good husband and setting up the family, I decided to get back into it and started checking out the car scene, but I didn't find any car shows warmly welcoming clunkers! However, I found myself 14 miles from Thompson Raceway Park, a quarter-mile dragstrip.

Big change! It no longer mattered if my car had the correct accessory brackets. Now, the brakes needed to work, the chassis needed to be checked out, and, most importantly, it had to make a full pass safely. So over time, it got new brake parts, all new front and rear suspension with bushings and steering, a spool in the rear end, a mild cam, new TCI transmission, hand-me-down drag slicks from my brother's drag bike, some body work, and a roller and brush paint job. At the end of 2022, we qualified to participate in the IHRA division finals representing the new owner of the local dragstrip, Kunhle Motorsports Park. I got clobbered, but we were there!

The car's name is "Rumblegutz," and the tow vehicle is Rusty, an unrestored, just barely maintained '63 Chevy dually flatbed. I love every aspect of your magazine—keep up the good work!

Dan Vaughan
Via mail



IT'S ABOUT HAVING FUN

Very good magazine. Bob Vencevich's Bel Air ("Forever 409," *HMM* #232) was unbelievable to have spent time on the drag strip and then sit for 40 years. Hard to believe it's in such good shape, especially the interior. I think my favorite story was Curtis Thomas' Comet ("Vision Realized"). Looks like a lot of fun without a lot of worries. Also keeps dreams alive by looking forward to and planning for the 427. That's half the fun.

I appreciate the cars and the work but grow tired of projects with unlimited budgets. A lot of fun can be had with cars that haven't had a body-off restoration and perfect details. Give me the driver every time and if it has 500 cubic inches and a five-speed manual, I'll have even more fun. I might even wash it once in a while. Probably never wax it, but I will Armor All the tires.

James Beamer
Galax, Virginia

POWERFUL LEGACY

As a recent subscriber of *HMM*, I was excited to see the article "A Deeper Dive" by Eric English in the February 2023 issue (*HMM* #234). What drove my excitement was the article covering the 1968 427 Biscayne. It brought back memories of my dad.

My dad had a 1968 Biscayne with a 427 motor. I remember he always told me that it was a rare car—he really drilled that point home with me. I think it was to underscore the need to keep it. My dad's Biscayne is red. Like the car featured in the article, the

427 was removed and it currently has a 454. The manual transmission was also swapped for an automatic. My dad's Biscayne was a radio-delete. Other than that information, I feel the frustration described at the beginning of the article about documentation.

My dad passed away unexpectedly in February of 2022. He left me with several legacies: One is the love of muscle cars — I have lots of memories of father-son project cars. Another is the legend of *Hemmings*. I used to read *Hemmings Motor News* and *HMM* after he was done. His passing got me to get my own subscription. Finally, my dad also left me some of his muscle cars, one of which is the 1968 Biscayne 427. I look forward to one day restoring it back to factory condition. This article has reinforced that desire.

Thank you for all the great articles.

Gregory File
Derby, Kansas

ONE MORE REASON

I read with interest and appreciation the Buyer's Guide in the November issue about C4 Corvettes and would suggest there is one more Corvette enthusiast reason to consider the C4s: The C5 was an all-new Corvette, but the C4 still had the original cast-iron small-block, and so had a lineage that goes back to the original C1.

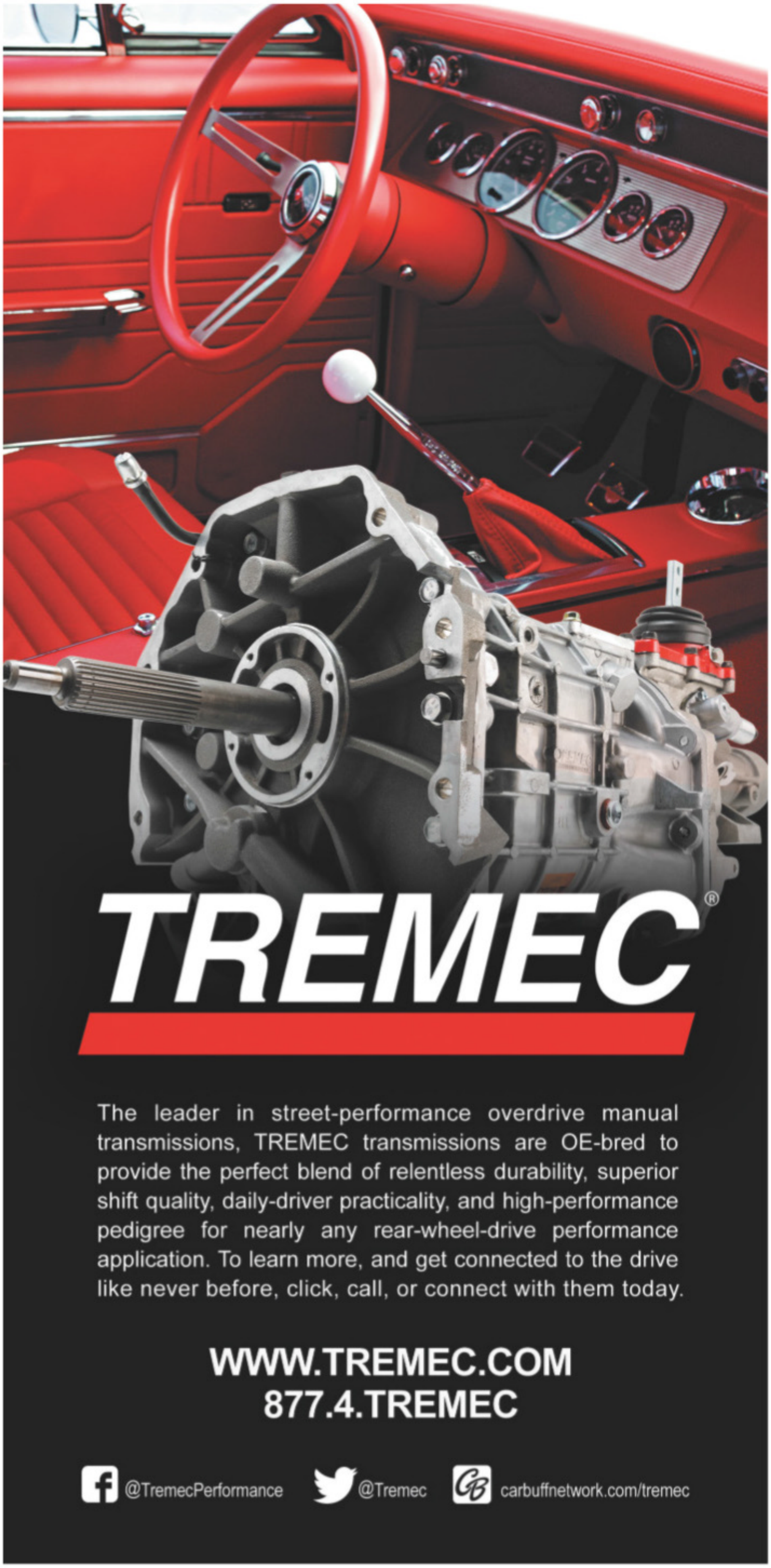
Dan Hall
Mount Laurel, Pennsylvania

T/A TWIN

As a subscriber, I look forward to my *HMM* in the mail. It was great to see Chip Stearns' 1991 Trans Am convertible in the Backfire section ("Convertible Correction," *HMM* 233).

My car was a twin to his, one of the 104 1991 T/A convertible five-speeds built. I bought (and sold) it twice, both times as a used car. I knew it was unusual when I saw the manual shifter. It was a blast to drive, and most days, top down! The picture is a rare moment with the top up.

Jeffrey Mitchell
Via email ■



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A CLEAR VISION

THIS RACING-INSPIRED, BIG-BLOCK-POWERED STINGRAY WAS THE LONGTIME DREAM OF RETIRED CORVETTE DESIGN DIRECTOR TOM PETERS

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BARRY KLUCZYK

TOM PETERS VIVIDLY RECALLS THE FIRST TIME

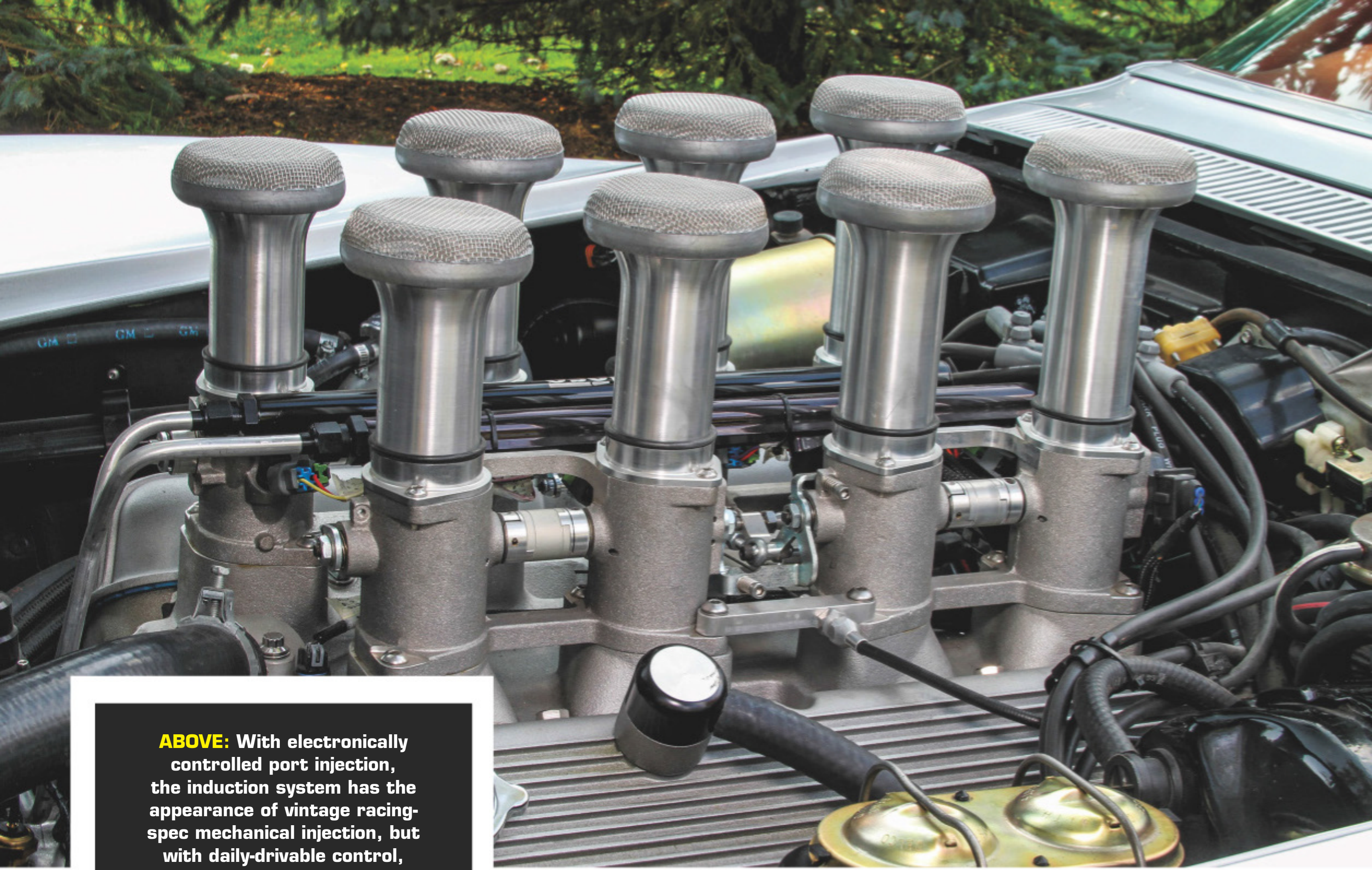
he went for a ride in the iconic American sports car.

"It was a 1968 coupe," he says. "I caught a ride home in one on the way home from work one day, when I was a teenager."

Tom was caddying at a Minnetonka, Minnesota, country club and says that, while brief, the encounter left a lasting impression.

"It was only about a mile or so in that car," he says. "But the way I sat *down* in that interior, looking out over the long nose and arching front fenders—it all just burned into my brain. It was inspiring."

More than just that first-year C3 burned into Tom's young mind. The whole car culture of the Sixties and the muscle car era blossomed during his formative years, etching the design ethos of the time into the brain of a kid who got in trouble for sketching cars in class. Fortunately, he never stopped drawing through high school, and by his second year



ABOVE: With electronically controlled port injection, the induction system has the appearance of vintage racing-spec mechanical injection, but with daily-drivable control, responsiveness and finesse.

OPPOSITE: The red cockpit is largely stock, with only the chrome-stick shifter for the Tremec TKO five-speed manual gearbox diverging from the Corvette's otherwise factory equipment.

Hoosier
Hoosier

in college, at Louisiana Tech, he happened on a catalog for the Art Center College of Design, in Los Angeles.

"It was an epiphany. It exposed me to the world of industrial design, and everything just clicked," Tom says. "That's where I needed to be, and it changed my life."

During his sophomore year at Art Center, Tom was invited to participate in General Motors' annual internship program. That was 1978; by 1982, he was hired and went to work at GM's Advanced Design studio, where his first assignment was developing concepts for a super-aerodynamic electric sedan.

"It was a great start and a couple of years later, after seeing a scale model I did for a future Corvette, Jerry Palmer — the chief designer for the Chevrolet 3 studio at the time — asked me to join the team that was responsible for the Corvette, Camaro, and Beretta," Tom says. "It was an amazing opportunity, and I began contributing to the 1985 Camaro IROC-Z."

He also established the final theme for the landmark, mid-engine Corvette Indy concept that debuted in 1986 and featured a GM Lotus-Ilmor

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32-valve racing engine. GM and Lotus, of course, would partner on the development of the original, 1990 Corvette ZR-1, which featured a 32-valve DOHC 5.7-liter V-8.

Tom also did the directional-style wheel that debuted on the 1988 Z51 package and became the standard wheel in 1989, along with what he calls the "bear claw" side vents that debuted on the facelifted 1991 Corvette.

More Corvette work followed, including the concept design that influenced the C5's styling, which led to serving as the exterior design director for the C6, C7, and C8 models. It was after seeing the mid-engine C8 off to production — and more than 35 years at GM — that Tom decided to pack up his art markers and call it a career.

Leaving the Corvette team was bittersweet, Tom says, after so much time in the studio, but the car wasn't about to drive out of his life. He still harbored the desire to build a C3, like the one that inspired him about half a century earlier.

"I had done a few other cars over the years, but I really wanted to do this Corvette when I had the time and focus to do exactly as I envisioned," he says. "And I always loved the look of the L88 race cars, like the Randy Wittine-designed Owens-Corning wide-body car driven by Tony DeLorenzo and Jerry Thompson — fender flares and side exhaust on a roadster with a hardtop. It was the toughest-looking thing on the track."

The look had been locked in Tom's brain for decades when he finally decided to pull the trigger for the build. He went as far as purchasing a project car, but it was a rough specimen. Turn Key Automotive's Rich Rinke, the builder tagged to bring the vision to reality (he also builds the COPO Camaro factory race cars for Chevrolet), suggested a '69 roadster a friend of his spotted at the Barrett-Jackson Scottsdale auction in 2016 might make a better starting point.

"I was actually out there chasing a '65 Impala SS convertible at one of the other auctions, when Rich called me about the car," Tom says. "I was waiting for my wife Carolyn to arrive; she's always been my partner with these cars. I wasn't even registered for the Barrett-Jackson auction, but we worked out the bidding through a third party. It all happened very quickly and when I finally saw my wife later that evening, I surprised her with the Corvette for her birthday."

It was white and an original big-block car, but with a 454-cu.in. crate engine. That was important, because Tom didn't want to cut up a numbers-matching Corvette — and the cutting started just as soon as the car arrived at Rinke's shop, north of Detroit.

"The first thing we did was hold up the fender flares to get an idea of their fit and placement," Tom recalls. Later, after having the flares properly bonded to the vintage fiberglass, the car was painted the same silver as the original 1959 Sting Ray race car concept. And when we say the same silver, we mean it. Tom actually

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Every drive in this Corvette is an experience. It is a beast in all the best ways, and we haven't quite found the edge of its performance yet, because there doesn't seem to be a bottom of its power reserve. The engine just keeps pulling and pulling. In fact, it's a little intimidating, because we don't know exactly how the car is going to react. We're creeping up on it and that's the fun part—exploring exactly what car is capable of.
—*Tom and Carolyn Peters*

located the original color chip in the General Motors Design Center and matched it.

That's pretty cool — and so are the wheels and tires filling out the fender flares, which include a period-perfect set of American Racing Torq-Thrust D wheels, measuring 15 x 8.5 inches in the front and 15 x 10 inches in the rear; along with Hoosier racing radials that contribute significantly to the car's track-inspired aesthetic.

"The car is largely Tom's vision, but I put my foot down on the tires," Carolyn Peters, his wife, says. "They were going to clean them up and paint the letters, so that it all looked brand-new, but I insisted the tires should remain a little dirty and gritty looking. Looks better that way."

No argument here.

When it came to the engine, Tom was again inspired by the performance trends of his youth, specifically the towering velocity stacks on the engines of everything from drag-racing gassers and A/FX cars to the thundering big-blocks of the Can Am race cars.

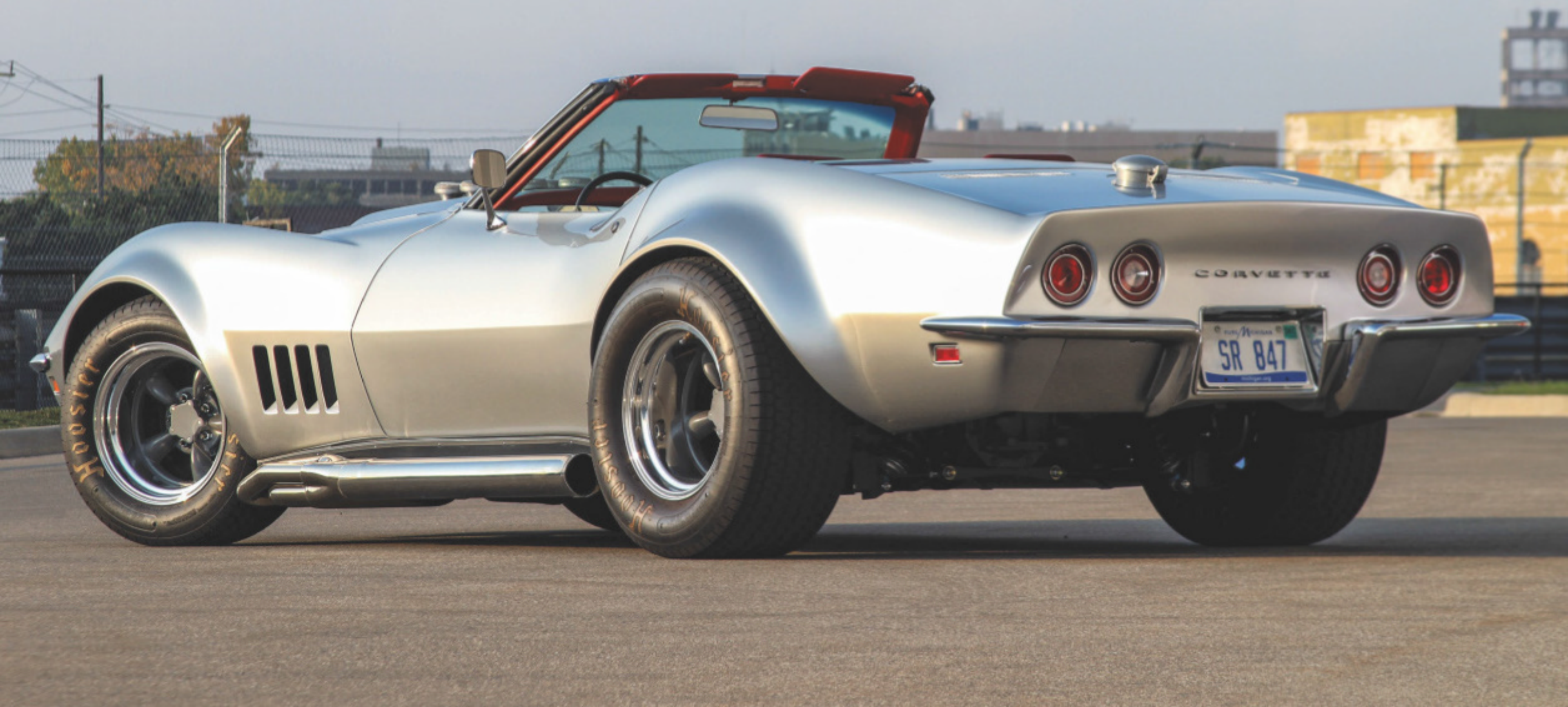
"The imagery of them was so vibrant and exotic," he says. "I wanted to pay homage to that with this car."

Starting with a contemporary Chevrolet Performance ZL1 aluminum cylinder block, Rinke's shop scratch-built a period-perfect Rat engine with forged internals and Edelbrock aluminum heads, then topped it an Inglese individual-runner EFI system. Aesthetics being everything to a designer, Tom had the system fitted with classic-looking Kinsler velocity stacks that were individually trimmed to ensure they were not only perfectly even, but protruded from the L88-style hood with just the right presence.

"I wanted to make the statement, but not overdo it — well, maybe a little," he says. "The look is everything and these stacks deliver it by reaching just a little over the top."

It's worth noting, too, that Tom had an original L88 hood for the car but couldn't bring himself to cut a hole in it, so it's now hanging in the living room. The one on the car is an aftermarket reproduction. Along with the injection system, the engine exhales through functional stainless steel side exhausts from Doug's Headers. It complements the car's visual feast with an aural chaser.

"I absolutely love the sound of that engine through the side exhaust,"



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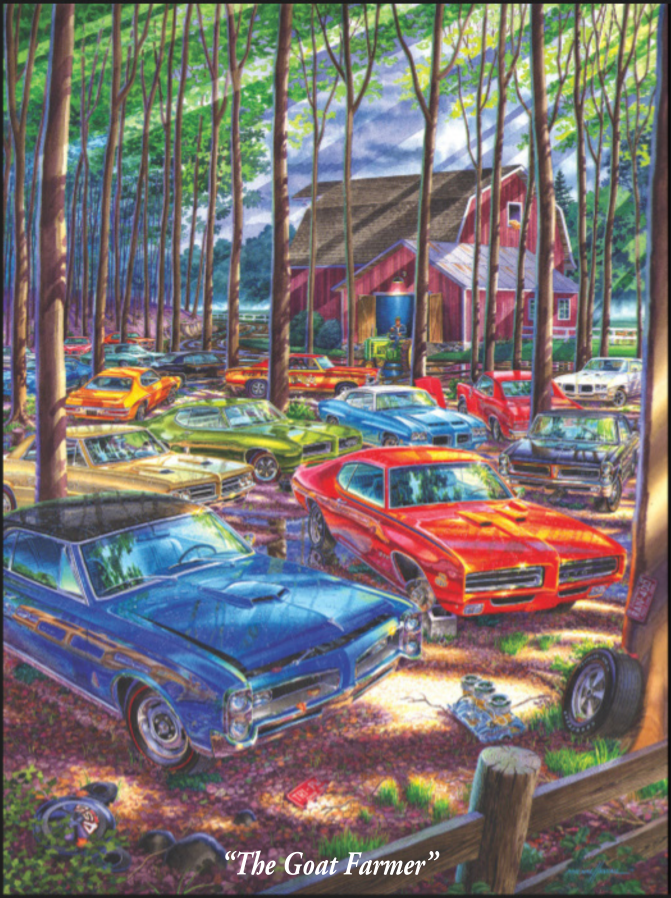

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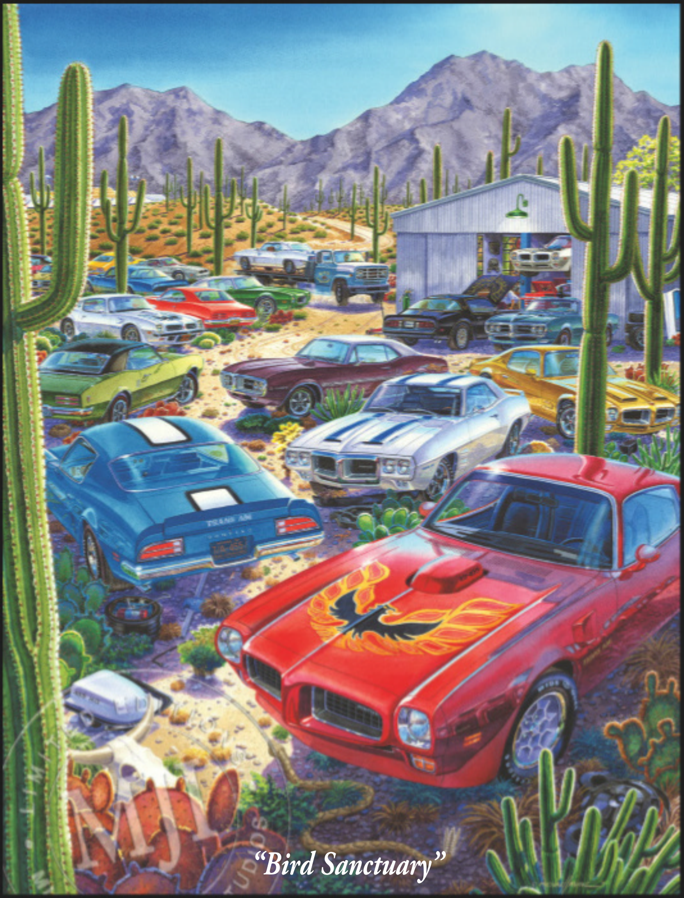

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Carolyn says. "It makes everyone smile and it sounds great with the crackle and popping on deceleration. It's the perfect soundtrack for this car."

Backing the boisterous big-block is a Tremec five-speed manual gearbox that channels torque to a 12-bolt differential filled with a Detroit Locker and 3.55 gears. Additional chassis and suspension upgrades include Ridetech front and rear coilover conversions, with JRI double-adjustable dampers, a Wilwood four-wheel disc brake system, and a Borgeson power-steering system.

The one thing that wasn't touched on the car was the red interior, which retains a factory radio-delete plate. The upholstery and other cabin trim were all in excellent condition upon the car's purchase and there was no need to embellish it, with the injection stacks, side exhaust, and fender flares doing all of this Corvette's talking.

"It's a very easy car to drive and the power comes on instantly," Tom says. "I love that it feeds the senses — the look, sound, and feel. It's everything. And with the top off, you hear the stacks drawing air when you put your foot down. It's just what was simmering in my mind over the years."

It's that vision thing. We can all be glad Tom Peters nourished it for so many years in the studio and, with this '69 roadster, in his personal garage. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

1969 CHEVROLET CORVETTE

ENGINE

Block type	Chevrolet Mark IV-style "big-block" with Chevrolet Performance ZL1 aluminum block
Cylinder heads	Edelbrock Performer RPM aluminum with 315-cc intake runners
Displacement	427 cubic inches
Bore x stroke	4.250 x 3.750 inches
Compression ratio	10.1:1
Horsepower	480 (est.)
Torque	520 lb-ft (est.)
Crankshaft	Forged steel
Camshaft	Comp Cams hydraulic roller
Induction system	Inglese port fuel injection intake manifold with custom individual velocity stacks
Ignition system	FAST dual-sync distributor
Exhaust system	Headers with side exhaust outlets

TRANSMISSION

Type	Tremec TKO 600 five-speed manual
Ratios	1st/2.87:1 ... 2nd/1.89:1 ... 3rd/1.28:1 ... 4th/1.00:1 ... 5th/0.82 ... Reverse/2.56:1

DIFFERENTIAL

Type	GM 12-bolt with Detroit Locker limited-slip differential and stub axles
Ratio	3.55:1

STEERING

Type	Borgeson power-assisted recirculating ball
Ratio	12.7:1

BRAKES

Type	Wilwood power-assisted four-wheel disc Front: 12.19-in slotted rotors with six-piston calipers Rear: 11.75-in slotted rotors with four-piston calipers

SUSPENSION

Front	Independent with RideTech coil-over conversion with JRI adjustable dampers and anti-sway bar
Rear	Independent with RideTech coil-over conversion with JRI adjustable dampers and anti-sway bar

WHEELS & TIRES

Wheels	American Racing Torq-Thrust D Front: 15 x 8.5 inches Rear: 15 x 10 inches
Tires	Hoosier Quick Time radial Front: 275/50D15 Rear: 325/50D15

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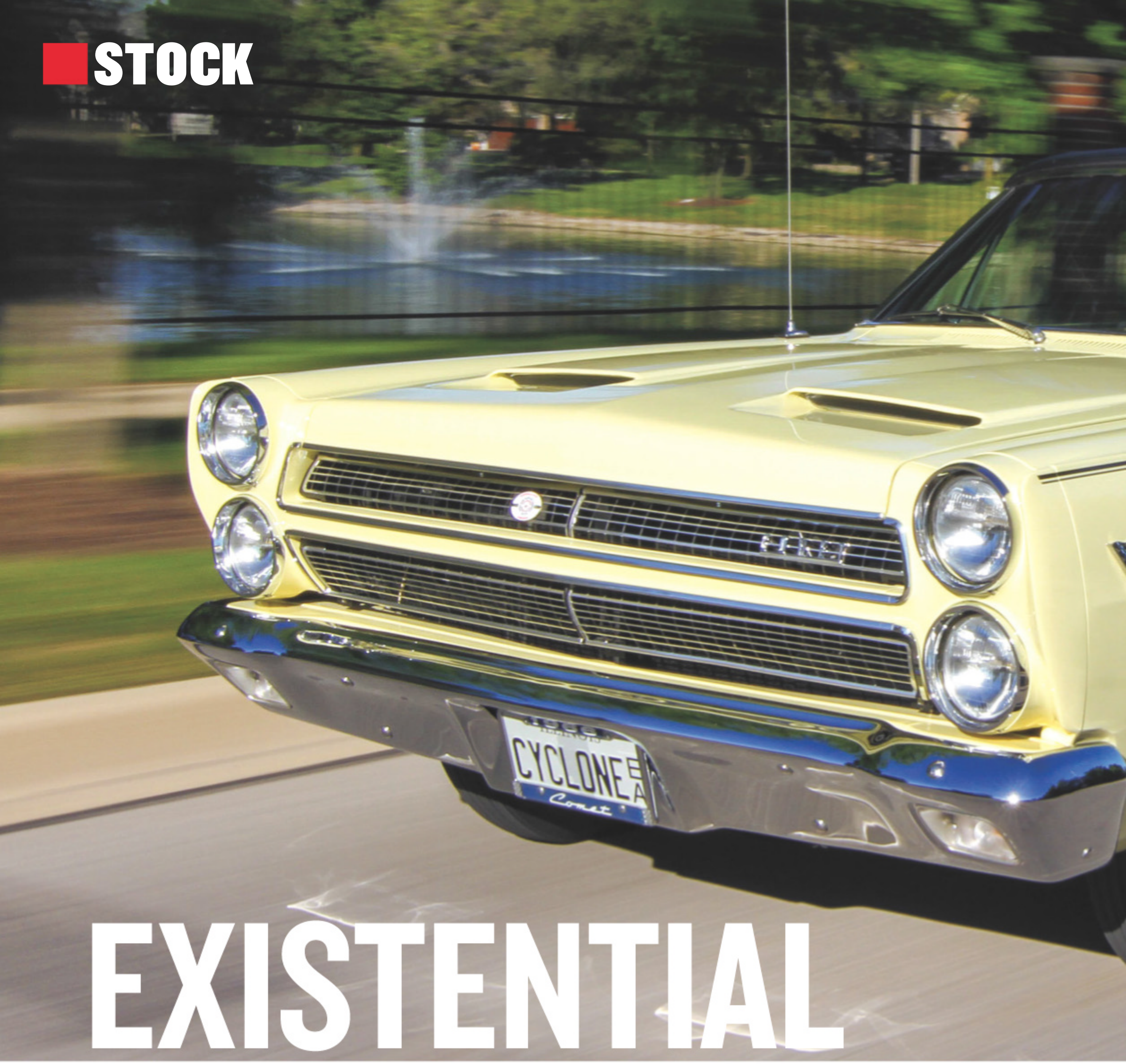


EXISTENTIAL MUSCLE

IN MERCURY'S SEARCH FOR IDENTITY, THE COMET CYCLONE GT SPOKE WITH CONFIDENCE AND PURPOSE

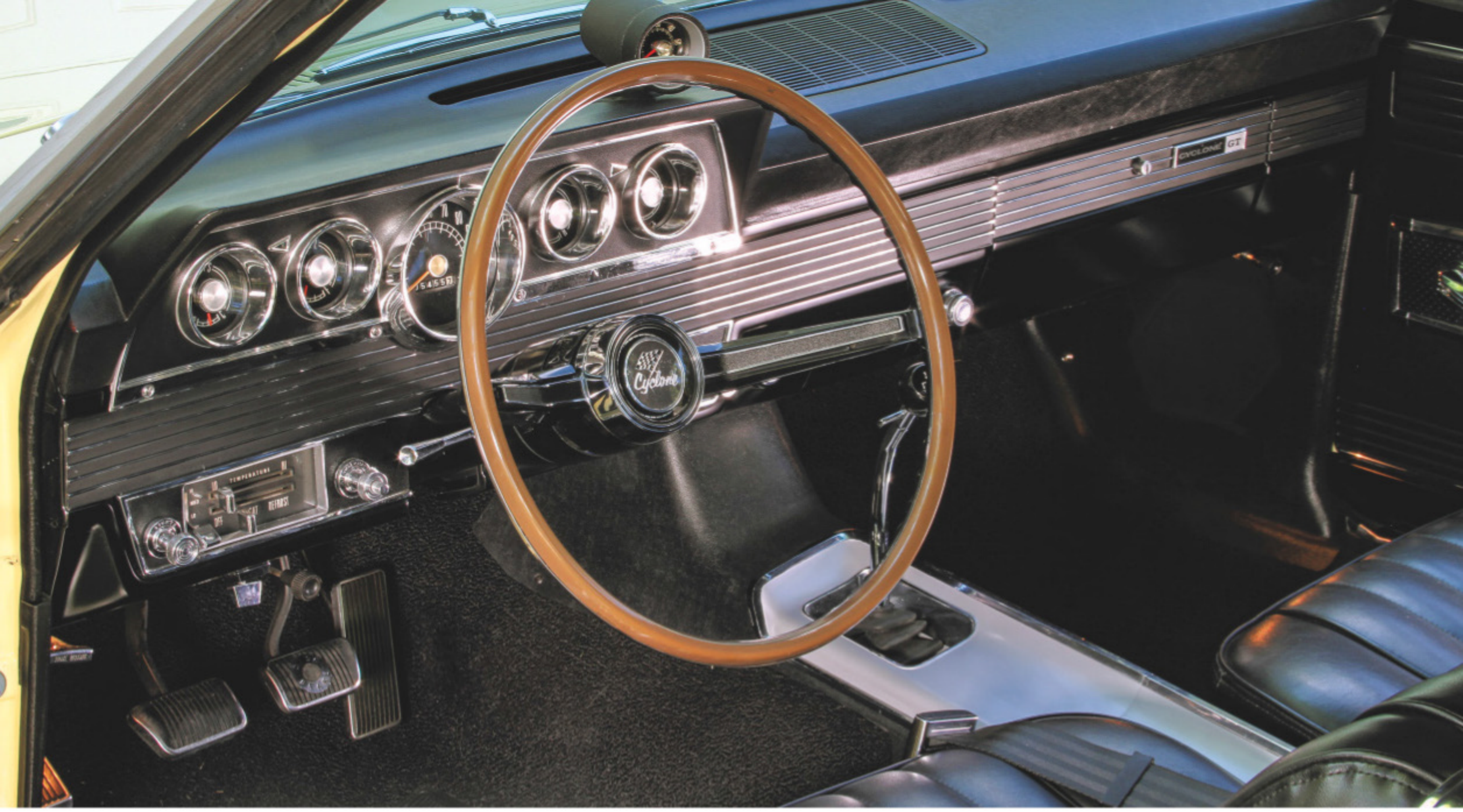
WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BARRY KLUCZYK

MERCURY WAS THE GOLDILOCKS OF CAR BRANDS in the mid-Sixties, dedicated to searching for that *just right* balance of its lineup. The Comet in particular was one of those cars that didn't quite fit.

It was originally conceived as an Edsel model, but when Ford pulled the plug on its expensive marketing misfire, the Comet's development was already well underway — and with the Falcon already headed for production, Dearborn's brass made the Comet a Lincoln-Mercury product.

It had an identity problem from the get-go, unfortunately, as the inaugural model was technically a standalone car, wearing neither Lincoln nor Mercury branding in 1960 or '61. There were also echoes of the Edsel in its design, as the long, thin taillamps looked an awful lot like the 1960 Edsel's, but canted at a 45-degree angle.

Then there was the Comet's size. It was larger than its Falcon architectural sibling, but smaller than the intermediates of the day, including Ford's own Fairlane, making it larger than compact, but not quite large enough for the intermediate



segment. The car trundled along for the first five years or so, doing well enough, though it was an oval looking for a round hole to fill.

That changed for 1966, when Mercury decided the Comet was to be a tweener no longer. They stretched the wheelbase to 116 inches and enlarged the car in other dimensions to make it a properly sized intermediate, sharing the same platform as the Fairlane. That's obvious from every angle of the 1966 Comet's design.

The Comet nonetheless carved out a distinctive identity, especially with the sporty Cyclone trim, which came standard with a 289 engine and offered a two-barrel 390 as an option. The available Cyclone GT moved the car solidly into muscle car territory, with the exclusive S-code 390 four-barrel power plant that was rated at 335 horsepower. The Cyclone GT package also included a chrome dress-up kit under the hood, dual exhaust, a handling package (higher-rate springs, stiffer shocks, and a thicker front anti-sway bar), checkered-flag fender badging, lower-body stripes, and a snazzy-looking yet non-functional twin-nostril "GT" fiberglass hood.

Production of the '66 Cyclone GT was comparatively low, especially for the convertible. Only 2,158 were produced — at a roughly 10-percent price premium over the hardtop coupe — and of them, only 539 were equipped with a four-speed transmission. That's what we're looking at here with Tom and Fran Harrington's restored example — a car with rarity they weren't necessarily looking for that nonetheless added spice to their find.

"In 1970, I had a 1966 Comet Caliente in Jamaican Yellow and simply wanted another in the same color," Tom Harrington says. "It took a while to find a good one."

Jamaican Yellow is Mercury's name for Ford's better-known Springtime Yellow, and the Harringtons' search brought them to a museum in their home state of Illinois. The place had two Comets, including this Cyclone GT convertible.

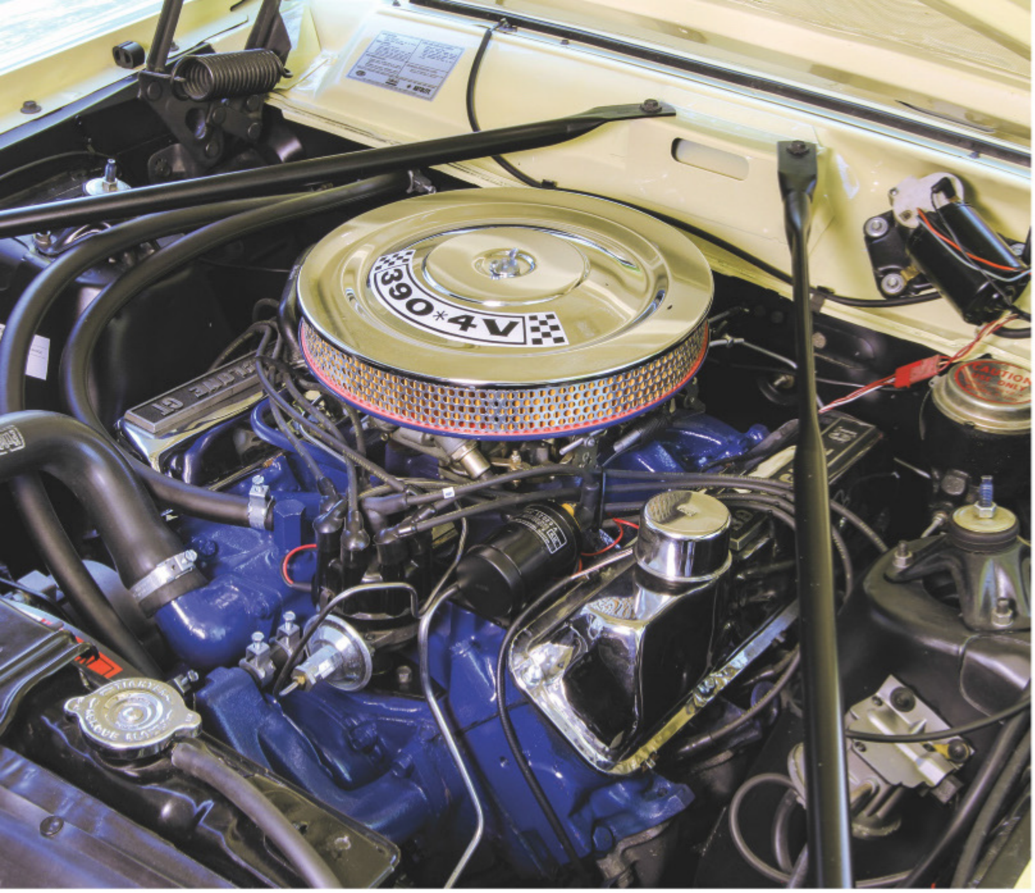
"Yellow was what we were looking for," Tom says. "That it was a Cyclone GT made it gold."

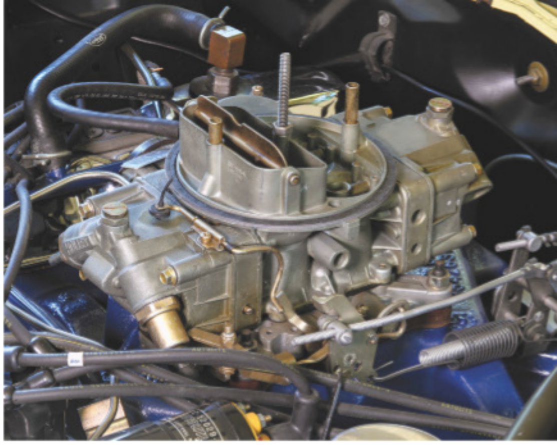
Research showed the Lorain, Ohio-built Mercury was originally shipped to the West Coast, through Ford's Oakland district, and spent a number of years there before it migrated eastward to Wisconsin. From there, it ended in the Illinois museum until the Harringtons purchased it in 2012. They drove it as it was for the next four years or so, knowing a few missing parts were keeping the car from being factory correct. Those included the induction system, valve covers, shifter, and more.

The Harringtons wanted the car to be as the factory intended — and even though the rest of the Comet was in very good shape for its age, they swallowed hard, warmed up their checkbook, and committed to a two-year, rotisserie restoration at Morris, Illinois-based Marvin's Motor City. As the shop got to work on stripping and revamping the body and chassis, Tom rebuilt the engine himself and spent a year and a half tracking down a set of correct valve covers, which had "Cyclone GT" badges affixed to them.

"Man, they were hard to find," he says. "I ultimately found two sets and bought them both, but it was a real treasure hunt in locating them."

After tearing down the S-code FE-based 390, believed to be the original engine, based on the casting numbers, Tom found someone had been inside engine previously. In fact, they'd replaced the original 3.78-inch-





ABOVE: The FE-based 390 was one of FoMoCo's more versatile and potent performance engines, with the "GT"-spec 335-hp version in the Cyclone shared with the Mustang and Fairlane.

OPPOSITE: With many trim items unique to the Cyclone, Tom and Fran Harrington were fortunate the interior was complete on their car, from the unique "Cyclone" emblems to the optional dash-mounted tach.

stroke crankshaft with the 3.98-inch crankshaft from a 428, which stroked the engine to 410 cubic inches. It was a hidden performance bump he left in place when buttoning up the assembly, which also included a factory-spec camshaft and more modern hypereutectic pistons. The heads also received hardened valve seats and stainless valves, for greater unleaded-gas compatibility.

Tom also installed the correct iron intake manifold and Holley four-barrel, along with those hens'-teeth-rare valve covers with the Cyclone GT badges. The Holley was unique to the S-code engine, as other Comet engines used Autolite carburetors. The rebuilt and restored engine also wore the factory chrome kit, which included the air cleaner, those valve covers, dipstick handle, and even the radiator cap.

The optional Toploader four-speed was paired with the 390 engine (a three-speed manual was standard equipment) and Tom notes a rebuild wasn't performed, because it had

CYCLONE
CYCLONE

MECURY
COMET
66
MECURY
COMET
66

> This is a car we really enjoy together—even though Fran can't drive a stick! But she absolutely enjoys the car and knows all the details about it, which surprises a lot of people at the different events we take it to. There are a lot of questions to answer about it, too, because it's a car you just don't see very often and there are no Mercury badges on it. It has really been something we've been able to share and have a lot of fun with wherever we take the car.
> *—Tom and Fran Harrington*

been done by the previous owner. The 9-inch rear axle, however, was rebuilt with a limited-slip differential, after it was discovered that one of the pins in the original open diff was sheared off in the rear-end housing. The Traction Lok differential was installed with the factory-correct 3.25:1 gearset.

The car rolls on reproduction Firestone bias-ply tires mounted on factory steel wheels trimmed with Mercury's signature stainless steel wheel covers that emulated the appearance of the chrome reverse wheels that were popular on the boulevard in the Sixties. They were available only on the Cyclone models for 1966, and while not quite as rare as the Cyclone GT valve covers, they nonetheless took time to locate, as the car wore incorrect Ford wheels when the Harringtons purchased it.

Power steering and power brakes were available on the Cyclone GT, but this car was ordered without them, yet it has front discs, which were added to the Cyclone equipment list about mid-year in production for 1966. Earlier-production cars rolled out of Lorain with four-wheel drums.

Over at Marvin's Motor City, the Comet's body was sent out for media blasting and, apparently, those early years in the dry California climate paid dividends in a blessedly solid foundation when it returned.

"We knew the car was really solid when we bought it and we were thrilled to find the body was in very good shape," says Tom. "There were a few pinholes in the driver's floorboard and a little bit of rust above the taillamps and under the trim for the convertible top. That was it."

Not bad. And fortunately, all the car's exterior trim was in place, including the special fiberglass hood and checkered-flag emblems. They would have been difficult to find, like the valve covers. After that, the restoration shop exterminated the comparatively minor infestation of tin worm, smoothed the Mercury's flanks, and shot new coats of Jamaican Yellow. And while it wasn't in bad shape, the convertible top was also replaced.

Inside, the Comet's cabin was in remarkably well-preserved condition and Tom reports the carpet, door panels, and window cranks were the only items replaced during the restoration. The seat covers and other soft bits were all in great condition and reused. The same went for all the interior trim, including the unique "Cyclone" center cap for the steering wheel and "Cyclone GT" badge on the glovebox door.

The steering wheel, however, was cracked and required a careful restoration, but this is the original and it was saved. Also original is the optional tachometer that's mounted atop the dashboard. Tom also found a factory-correct shifter to replace the aftermarket one that came in the car when he and Fran purchased it.

Since the restoration was completed about four years ago, the couple has admittedly been careful with their rare Mercury muscle car, but the Harringtons aren't shy about sliding behind the wheel. They reportedly hit a couple of shows or cruise nights every week in the warm weather, and they've shown the car at the Fairlane Club of America National Meet and the Muscle Car and Corvette Nationals (MCACN), which is where we first laid eyes on the rare convertible.

Forever caught between mainstream Ford and luxury Lincoln, Mercury always endured something of an existential crisis, seeking its own identity. The Comet was born in limbo, but when it became a proper intermediate-size car in 1966, customers responded, particularly to the high-performance Cyclone GT model. In fact, the Cyclone GT's sales more than doubled those of the regular Cyclone for the year.

More than 24,000 Cyclone and Cyclone GTs were produced for 1966, but with only 2,158 built, the convertible Cyclone GT was a rare sight at the local drive-in when new and is an even rarer sight 57 years later. Tom and Fran Harrington have preserved a very rare example of Mercury muscle that also represents an important step in the brand's ardent attempt to solve its identity crisis.

It's debatable whether Mercury ever moved beyond its broader existential issues, as even the 1966 Comet did not have a single Mercury badge on its flanks—just like the original 1960 model—but when it came to muscle cars, they were self-assured. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

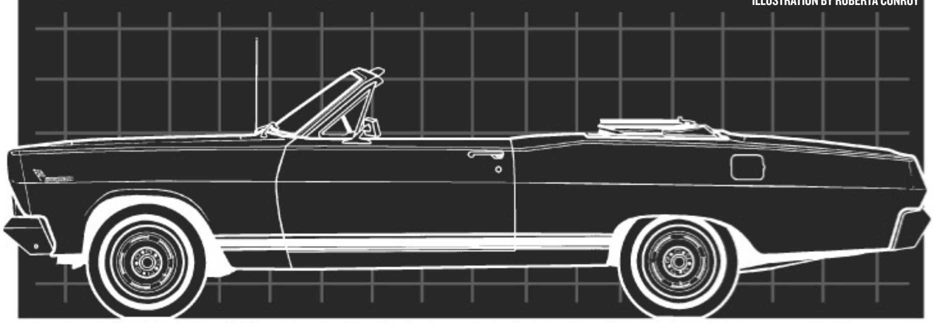


ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERTA CONROY

1966 MERCURY COMET CYCLONE GT CONVERTIBLE

PRICE

Base price	$3,152
Options on car profiled	Four-speed manual transmission; stainless-steel wheel covers; dash-mounted tachometer; AM radio

ENGINE

Type	Ford FE-series OHV V-8; cast-iron block
Displacement	390 (Currently 410) cubic inches
Bore x stroke	4.05 x 3.78 (Currently 3.98) inches
Compression ratio	10.5:1
Horsepower @ rpm	335 @ 4,800 rpm
Torque @ rpm	427 lb-ft @ 3,200 rpm
Valvetrain	Hydraulic lifters; shaft-type rocker arms with 1.76:1 ratio
Fuel system	Single Holley 4150C four-barrel (735 cfm); mechanical fuel pump
Ignition system	Autolite single-point mechanical-advance distributor; 12-volt electrical system
Exhaust system	Cast-iron exhaust manifolds and 2.25-inch dual exhaust

TRANSMISSION

Type	Ford Toploader four-speed manual
Ratio	1st/2.78:1 … 2nd/1.93:1 … 3rd/1.36:1 … 4th/1.00:1 … Reverse/2.32:1

DIFFERENTIAL

Type	Hypoid; Ford 9-in open (currently Traction-Lok limited slip)
Ratio	3.25:1

STEERING

Type	Recirculating ball; unassisted
Ratio	16.5:1

BRAKES

Type	Hydraulic; unassisted, single-circuit front disc/rear drum Front: 11.3-in vented disc Rear: 10.0 x 2.0-in drum

SUSPENSION

Front	Independent with unequal-length control arms; coil springs, hydraulic shock absorbers and anti-sway bar
Rear	Solid axle with asymmetrical semi-elliptic leaf springs, hydraulic shock absorbers

WHEELS & TIRES

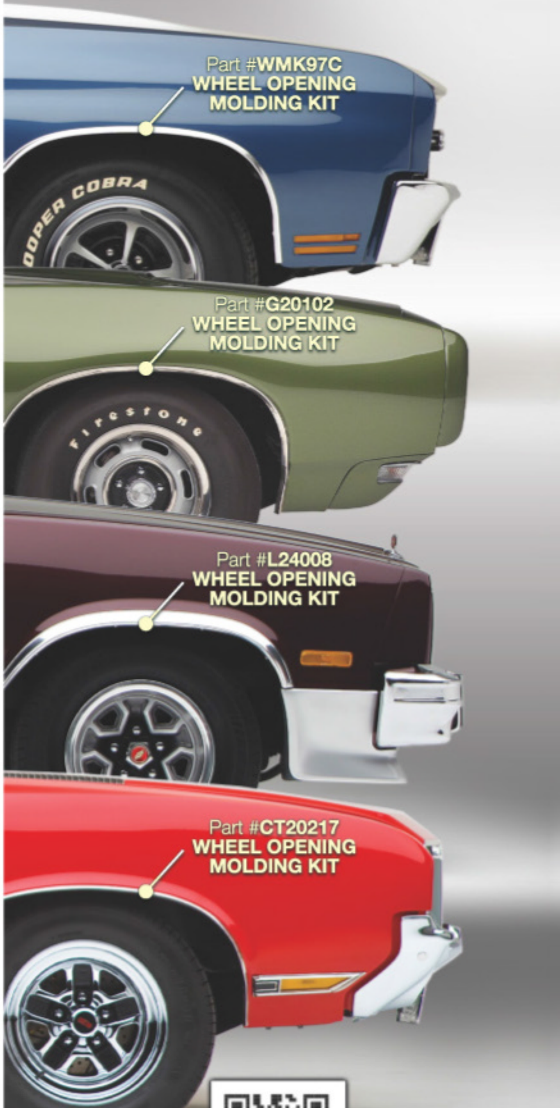
Wheels	Stamped steel with snap-on cover Front/Rear: 14 x 6 inches
Tires	Firestone bias-ply Front/Rear: 775-14

PRODUCTION

Mercury produced 24,164 Comet Cyclone and Cyclone GT models in 1966. Of them, 2,158 were Cyclone GT convertibles. It is believed 539 of those convertibles were equipped with the optional four-speed manual transmission.

PERFORMANCE

0-60 mph	7.5 sec (est)
1/4-mile ET	14.75 sec @ 99 mph (est)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HOLLEY'S LS FEST

A CELEBRATION OF ALL THINGS POWERED BY GM'S GEN III/IV SMALL-BLOCK

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHUCK HANSON

GREAT BILLOWING CLOUDS OF ACRID SMOKE hung in the air as the two vehicles hurtled with abandon towards the big sweeper, locked in door-handle-to-door-handle combat. The pungent smell of molten rubber assaulted our olfactory receptors while the screaming tires were matched in protest by the wailing engines bumping their rev limiters. As the drivers careened through the drifting course, fastidiously applying the hand brakes, furiously locking the front wheels left and right, and controlling the vehicles' trajectory with the throttle, we could hear the crowd's cheers rise above the on-track cacophony, and we turned to see the packed masses standing in unison and bellowing their approval of the spectacle before them.

At that precise moment we became keenly aware that this was no ordinary, sit-in-the-shade-and-talk-about-the-old-times kind of car show. The crowd was lively and energetic, and the various elements of the event provided sufficient visceral indulgence to make even the elders in attendance feel young(er) again. And that is what Holley's LS Fest is all about.

THERE'S NO DISPUTING THE FACT THAT GM'S "LS" — the catch-all term often applied to the Gen III and Gen IV small-block V-8 — is currently the most popular platform for engine swaps and modifications. We've witnessed them dropped into everything from Mustangs to Mopars, from Cadillacs to C-10s. And even though the engine itself is inarguably high tech, to us the variety of applications scream old tech when it comes to innovation, ingenuity, and engineering. Whether intended or not, the LS has certainly had a hand in reviving real old-time hot rodding.

The LS launched an entire industry based on the use and application of this amazingly versatile and ubiquitous engine family. The fact that it was installed in millions of GM passenger cars and trucks (seemingly with nearly as many variations) makes it accessible to most anyone with a little jingle in their pockets and an accommodating engine compartment.

Wait. Forget that. We've witnessed LS engines stuffed into projects that didn't even *have* an engine compartment. And the minimal money approach only works for so long before the yearning to upgrade kicks in. Nevertheless, any cost barriers to entry are still easy to jump across, and that's largely what makes the LS so popular.

With incredible foresight, Holley embraced the platform and its followers with an event created specifically to celebrate all things LS. Now in its 13th year, the event has grown into one of the most popular automotive gatherings on the summertime schedule. In fact, demand for Holley to host similar events in other locations has led to LS Fest West in Las Vegas and LS Fest Texas at the Texas Motor Speedway north of Dallas.

Intrigued by the possibility of what we might find at Holley's LS Fest, we made the trek to Bowling Green, Kentucky, where Holley is headquartered and where the granddaddy of the event is held at the nearby Beech Bend Motorsports Complex.

If you have an LS-based engine stuffed under the hood, or even if you're just contemplating an LS swap, one of these events will certainly boost your inspiration. Whether you're into muscle cars, trucks, imports, drift cars, drag cars, street rods, rat rods, or whatever… if their motivation comes from an LS engine, this is your kind of event. And for those who prefer to participate rather than spectate, there's drag racing, an autocross, track time at the Corvette Museum's road course, the "Show-n-Shine" car show, an off-road challenge, timed engine building, and many more activity options.

Amazingly, over 2,000 registered participants and more than 35,000 spectators crammed into the event venue, eager to see the latest incarnations and applications of their favorite engine. One of the first things we noticed was that the crowd was noticeably younger than many more traditional car shows; the prime range seemed to be from mid-20s to early 40s. The youthful demographic was reflected in the unbridled enthusiasm and amazingly creative ways they approach the hobby.

Plenty of cruising lanes throughout the event provided ample opportunity for profilin', while an abundance of vendors gave participants plenty of excuses to stop and drop their coin on much-needed parts for their projects.

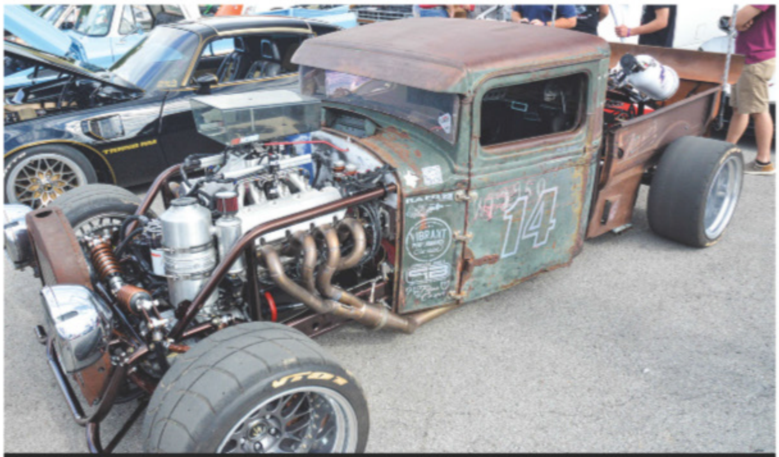
A portion of the event was conducted a couple of miles away from Beech Bend at the National Corvette Museum's road course. Although track-prepped Corvettes and Camaros were the mainstay, other iron, like this surprisingly capable Rambler wagon, negotiated the circuit with aplomb.

As Chicagoan Wes Wurchowski puts it: "We're breaking new ground here. We're finding new ways to put our ideas to work, even though many of us were inspired by old-school builds. Manufactured parts are easy and fun but building something from scratch is where the real challenge and reward is." We heartily concur, and it's that same unabated curiosity and creativity that will carry our hobby into the future.

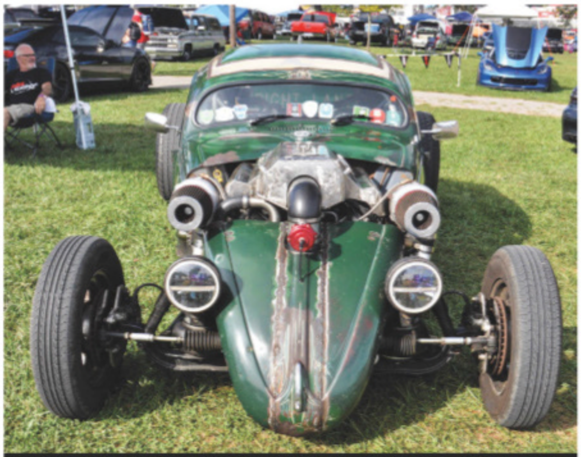
And what about those manufactured parts? Well, there were plenty to be found as well, since many of us don't possess the time, talent, and/or ambition needed to create our own. The manufacturer's midway was absolutely jammed the entire weekend with customers checking out the latest hardware and ideas from more than 300 LS-related vendors, with engine and suspension hardware creating most of the conversation.

This is a big event, both in physical size and scope, so comfortable clothes and supportive shoes are mandatory. After a weekend of walking the entire venue, our physical exhaustion was easily outweighed by the emotional excitement of what we'd witnessed, and we had gained a fresh and optimistic outlook on what the future holds for our hobby.

So, if this sounds like a great way to fill a weekend and have fun at the same time, we say go for it! Who knows what might inspire you to take on your next project? At the LS Fest, we certainly found plenty of inspiration and countless ways to make our ideas come to life. You can find out more about the Holley LS Fests by checking out lsfest.com.



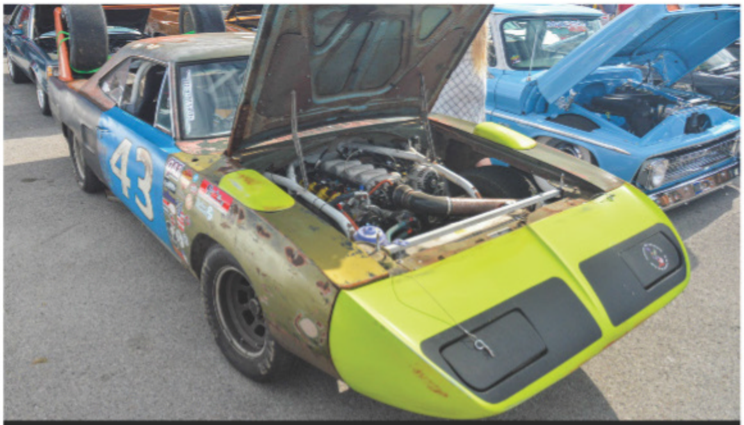
Well, it may not be pretty, but it sure is fast! Fat rubber, an ultra-trick suspension, and a stance that's lower than a snake's belly made sure that this vintage tin was quite capable of cutting corners, while the wet-sump LS and a healthy dose of nitrous helped it cut off the competition.



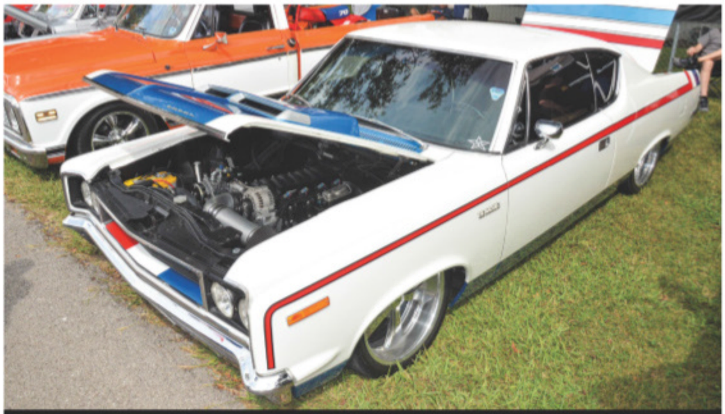
It took considerable slicing and dicing to fit a twin turbo'd LS into the confines of this vintage Volkswagen "Bug," but the combination is a guaranteed thrill every time the right foot meets the floorpan.

PEOPLE MOVER

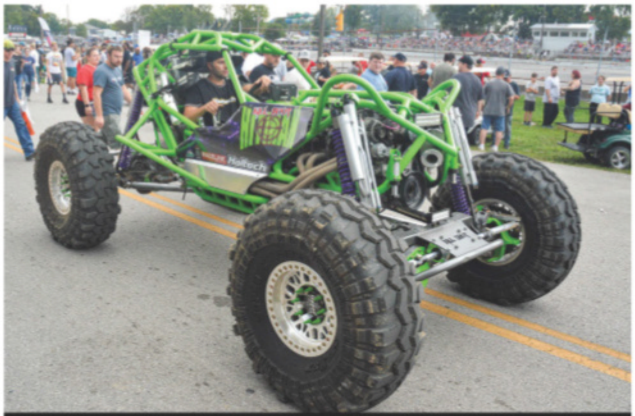
With the event's layout covering more than 200 acres, this people mover was a welcome and well-used necessity. Several stops along a regular route facilitated travel for those negotiating the LS Fest from one end to the other.



Cross-bred creations like this pieced-together Plymouth Superbird were sure to have the purists' heads exploding. While we're assuming this was not an original 'bird, an engine bay stuffed full of an LS power might still be considered a serious transgression by the Mopar faithful—even if it's a reimagined "tribute." But we bet it was still a blast to drive.



Decked out in its patriotic factory paint scheme, what appeared to be an original American Motors Rebel Machine was actually crammed full of LS power. While it may have had AMC fans shaking their heads at the notion, we couldn't help wondering, what could be more American?



Another example of how anything and everything benefits from the inclusion of LS power, this well-constructed rock climber was spotted cruising through a crowded main event area, giving everyone a good look at its state-of-the-art setup.

SLIDE SHOW

Drifting is a form of competition that may not be familiar to all muscle car fans, but one thing is for certain: it's unquestionably the most popular spectator activity at LS Fest. Plenty of tire smoke, screaming engines, and side-by-side competition kept the stands packed every time the slide show was kicked into action. While the competitors did their best to shred tires while creating an incredible smoke show, the crowd screamed its exuberant response.

While the blue Mustang nearly conceals the competition next to it in tire smoke, the wheels are locked right as the throttle redirects the car in a left-hand turn.

Although it's not intended as a contact sport, the occasional rubbing of fenders is an inevitability for racers that stay in the game long enough. The packed stands and the animated response of the spectators reflect the popularity of this exciting event.

Corvettes and Nissan's 240SX (usually repowered by an LS V-8) are both popular platforms for drifting competition. And while the competition leaves them a bit ragged around the edges, the technology it takes to successfully compete is staggering.

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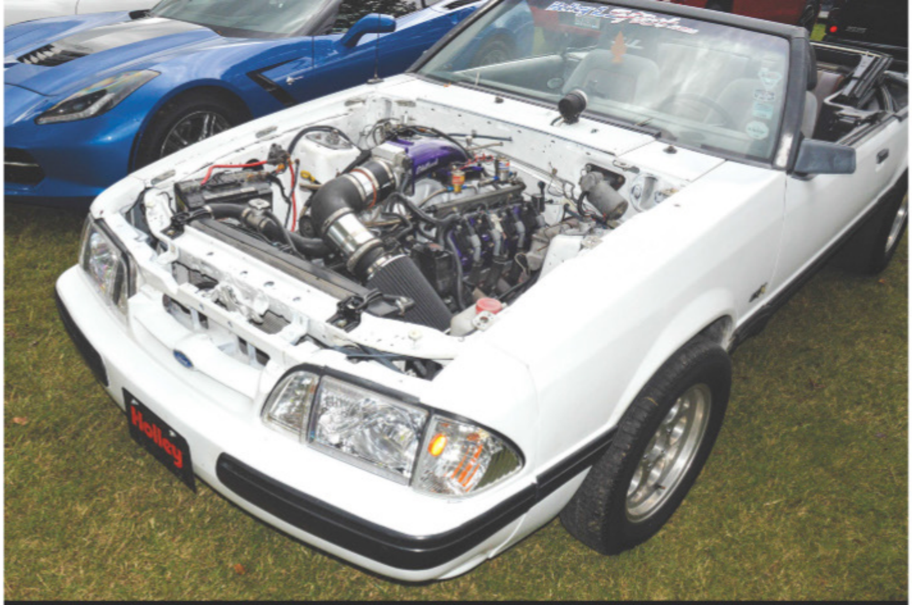
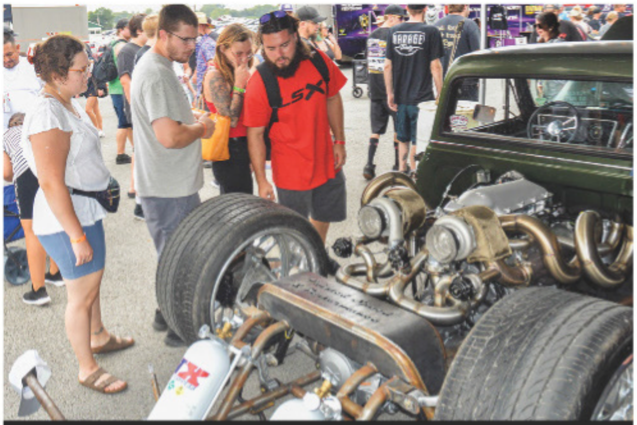
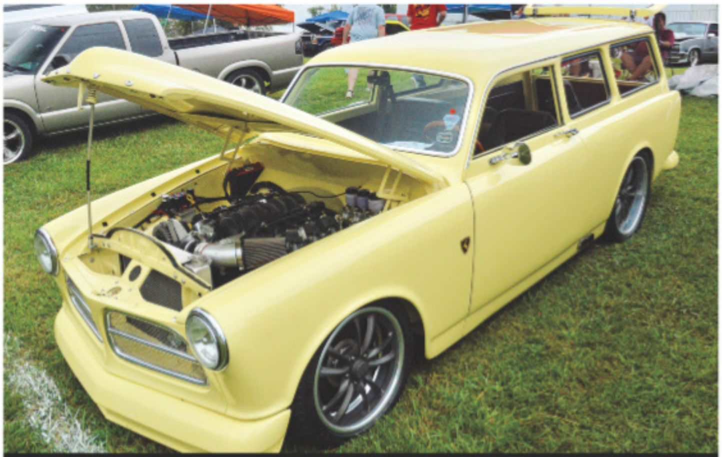


The owner of this Mustang was extremely proud of the LS engine under the hood, so he decided to just leave it off. With a big shot of nitrous introduced into the highly modified and enlarged LS-based power source, this Mustang was likely a serious strip contender.

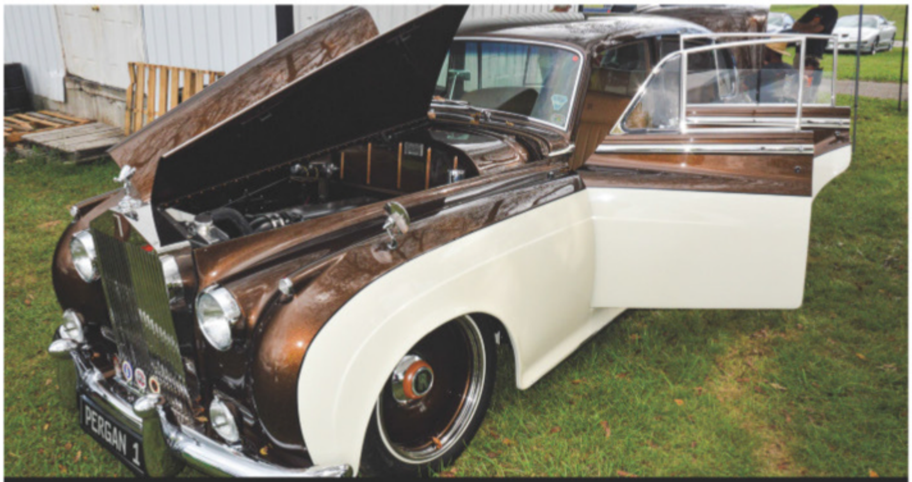
As the producer of the event, Holley anchored the midway with representation from each brand under its umbrella, a full display of all their products, and a capable tech team to answer any questions.



Ingenuity and considerable engineering were evident in this rear-engined early-'70s C10. The crowd shared our curiosity and appreciation for the effort, as a steady stream of onlookers plowed past the extraordinary creation all weekend long.



Limited only by his imagination, Greg Carnforth's Louisville, Kentucky-based Volvo wagon is the result of a Swedish-American marriage of iron and steel plus untold hours of engineering and fabrication.

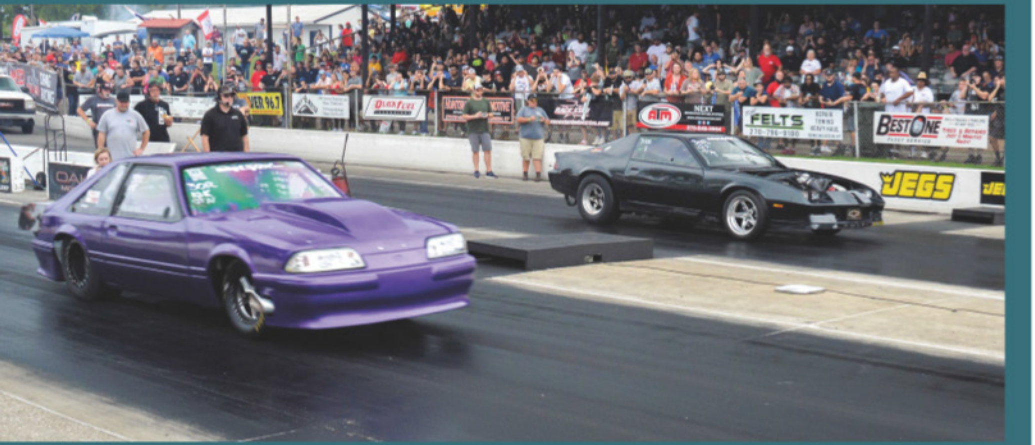


You're kidding, right? Who would have ever considered a classic Rolls-Royce for an LS swap? This one gets down the road nicely, thank you, with a full complement of luxurious accouterments that maintain the nature of refined motoring and a capable gas pedal that keeps things interesting.

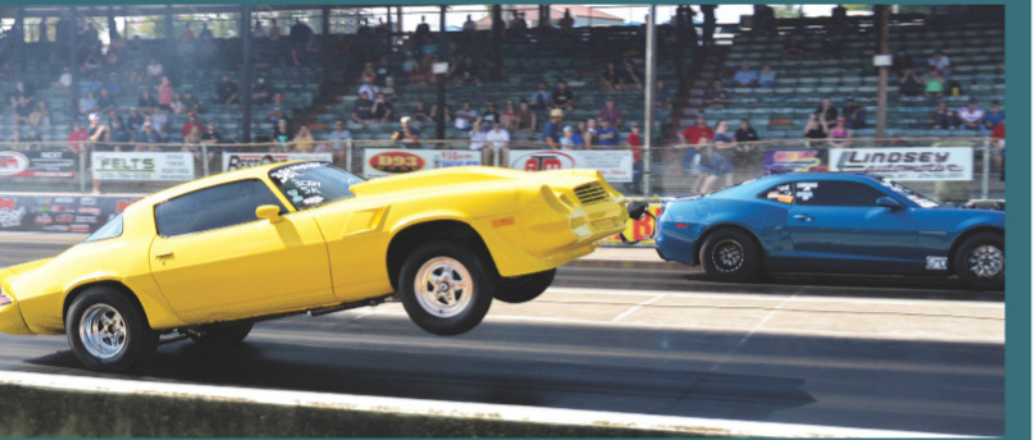
Even young enthusiasts had plenty to keep them occupied, and this Hot Wheels race setup was heavily populated for the duration of the event by youthful copies of their gearhead parents.

QUARTER POUNDERS

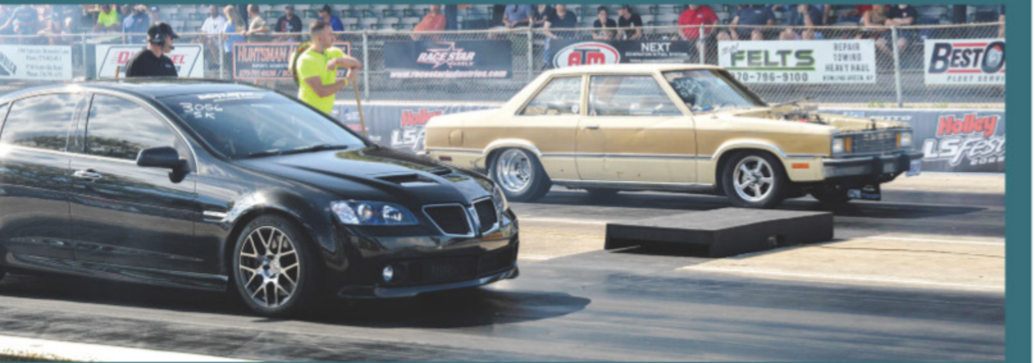
Drag racing is as American as apple pie, so it's not surprising that most of the LS-powered showed up in domestic sheetmetal. Brand diversity was not lacking, however, as nearly every nameplate from classic to current was represented, causing some interesting conversation and cajoling, both in the pits and the stands.



The application of LS power to non-GM platforms was evidenced strongly on the dragstrip, where cross-breeding in the name of performance overruled any brand allegiance. The purple Mustang lined up next to the Camaro is but one example.



The LS engines are capable of brutal power with or without power adders, and this second-gen Camaro's wheels-up launch against the supercharged late-model Camaro is a great example that provided plenty of exciting action.



Matchups like this late-model Pontiac G8 and '80s Ford Fairmont were commonplace, and gave the spectators plenty to cheer about regardless of personal brand allegiance.

the D.U.I. report

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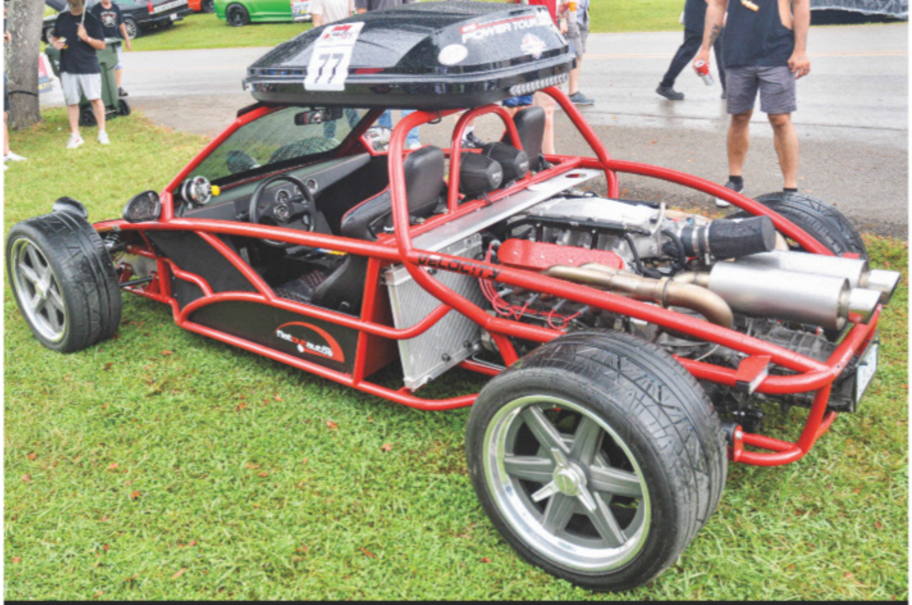
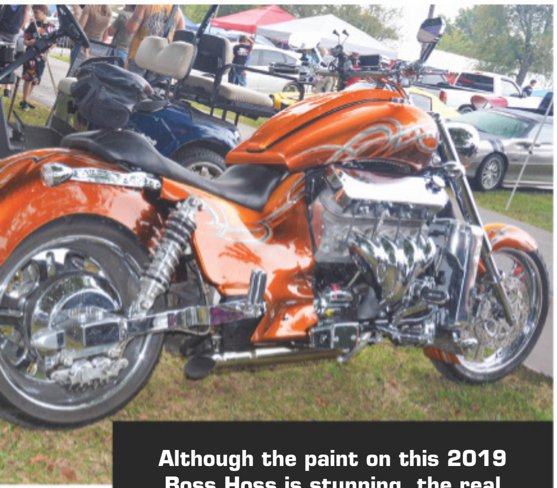
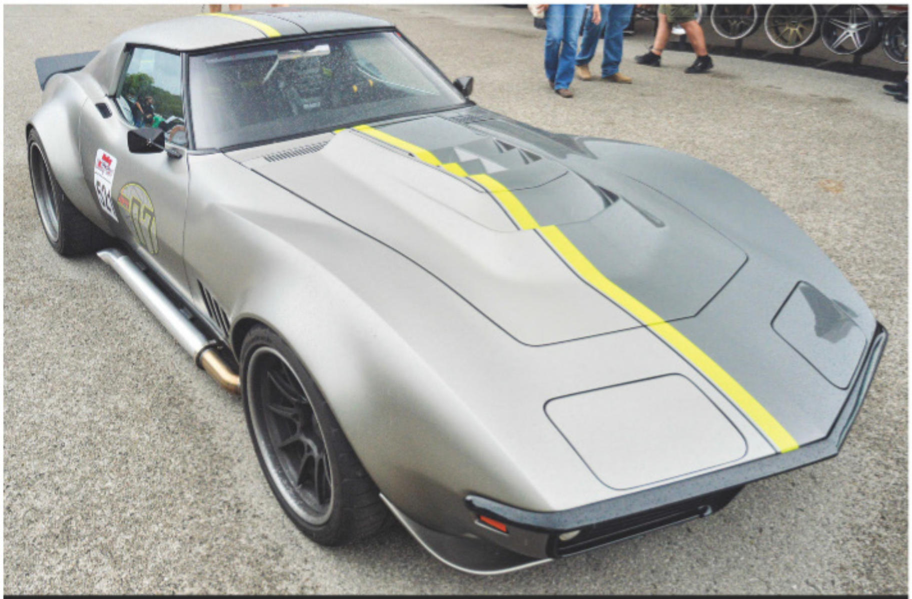


This Velocity Exo is a kit car originally designed for a Volkswagen 1.8-liter engine, but Rob Hester from Jonesboro, Arkansas decided to plug in a 400-hp LS1 that transmits its power through a Porsche Boxster transaxle. It weighs a scant 1,900 lbs and delivers plenty of smiles per gallon.

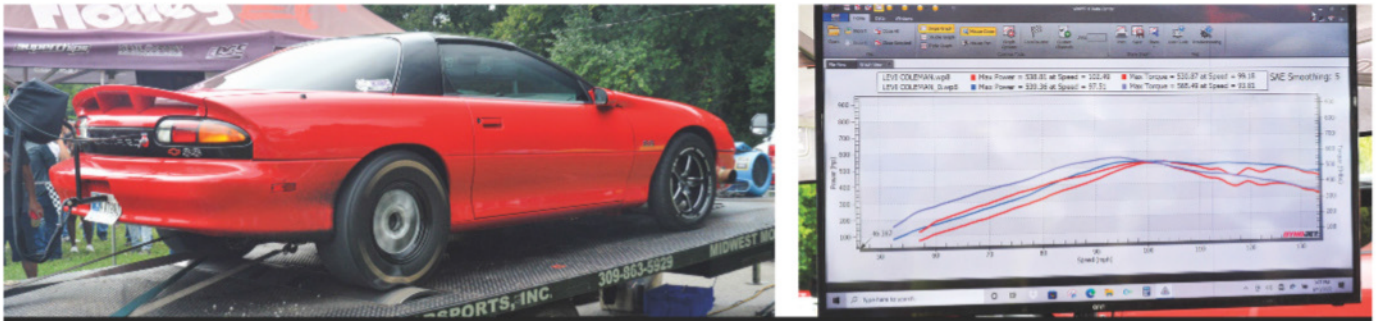
Off-road vehicles are the recipients of numerous LS power infusions as well, which created plenty of airborne excitement on the challenging course created just for their activities.



Although the paint on this 2019 Boss Hoss is stunning, the real eye candy is the 625-hp, 427-cu.in. LS strapped between the rider's legs. If you're a biker looking for a little wind therapy, twisting the throttle on this monster is sure to smack you right in the face.



We spotted this clean Corvette parked in the midway and found ourselves circling it a couple of times to gain a full appreciation for the craftsmanship and the road-racing style it represented.



The mobile wheel dyno determined whether the vehicle strapped to it was a hero… or not. Levi Coleman's turbocharged Camaro lit up the digital display with a reading of 539 horsepower and 565 lb-ft of torque. Pretty impressive for a fun ride that sees regular street duty. ■

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DON'T GET STUNG

INSPECTION TIPS FOR THE C2 CORVETTE TO HELP ENSURE A CONFIDENT STING RAY PURCHASE

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BARRY KLUCZYK

PURCHASING A VINTAGE CAR CAN CARRY risks that give second thoughts to even the most seasoned enthusiasts. Those trepidations are amplified when it comes to putting your money down for a classic Corvette.

They're Chevys, but in a world of their own when it comes to value, maintenance, and the ownership experience. As a Corvette restorer and NCRS judge tells us: "To get the most out of a classic Corvette, you've got to be very sure about what you're getting into."

In other words, you've got to do your homework — especially if you're buying your first vintage 'Vette. There are plenty of questions to ask the seller about the car's history and originality, but it's crucial to get down on your hands and knees to inspect a prospective purchase from top to bottom. It's the only way you'll know for sure if the car is exactly as the seller is presented.

That may sound obvious, but far too many people take sellers at their word, only to be disappointed later. In some cases, the seller may have been outright deceitful, but in many instances, a car owner may not know the full story of his or her own vehicle. The Corvette is one of those automotive icons that draws speculators and casual car fans who are more interested in flipping the car or simply having the classic Corvette driving experience for a while. They don't necessarily know the nuts and bolts of the car.

It's particularly true when it comes to the C2 or "midyear" cars from 1963-'67. They're the classic Sting Ray models, and a thorough inspection is essential to ensure you don't end up with a fiberglass-wrapped money pit. Frame and/or body repair needs can quickly add up with these cars, and the specialty work involved with making one right can easily surpass its value.

That's our focus with this story: A C2 inspection that helps even first-time Corvette buyers feel confident about their purchase. In fact, we recently tagged along with a friend on the inspection of a 327-powered 1967 Corvette coupe wearing an older restoration. While he was chatting about the car with the seller, we stuck our camera lenses underneath it to document its condition, which we've outlined in the accompanying photos.

The big irony with vintage Corvettes is the assumption that, because of their fiberglass bodies, rust isn't an issue, when it's actually the most important factor to consider. The two areas of concern are the frame and the "birdcage" structure that serves as the underlying framework to which the body is attached.

The birdcage structure includes the windshield frame, door hinge pillar, door lock pillar, the underlying framework for the roof, and the rockers. Because most of the birdcage is hidden by the body, it is difficult to discern if there's a problem, but telltale clues include window moldings that have popped off their mounts and/or won't sit flush against the window frame. Also: The condition of the radiator core support lower channel is a good indicator. If it's bad, it's a good bet the birdcage is, too.

Frame rust is common, too, and much easier to discern during an inspection. It is not necessarily a deal-breaker, though, especially compared to the birdcage. Depending on the extent of frame rust, it can be repaired. It's not an inexpensive project, but it's doable. Birdcage rust, on the other hand, *should* be considered a deal-breaker. It's not a financially feasible repair project.

Additionally, these Corvette bodies were assembled from many components that were joined with reinforcing lengths of fiberglass known as bonding strips. They have always been difficult to repair — or, at least, to repair properly.

Over the years, many do-it-yourselfers and inexperienced body shops tackled it in the best ways they could, but the results often manifested in flaws that emerged later. Uneven body gaps and panel flushness are the biggest indicators of less-than-stellar bodywork. It's true the factory tolerances in the early days were comparatively generous, but Chevrolet actually did pretty well at it, so poor body fit that is readily apparent is a red flag.

Even if the gaps look good, examine the car indoors and under fluorescent lighting, whenever possible. It will reveal flaws or signs of repairs that sunlight masks. Typically, this will show where splices in the fiberglass may have been made, such as where the nose of the car was cut off and another section joined.

Much of the rest of a C2's inspection follows the guidelines for examining other collector cars, which we've applied to the '67 our friend was interested in purchasing. Notably, we're not talking about prices or value here — only whether the car's physical condition lived up to his goal of finding a fair-weather driver and not a project vehicle.

In other words, it was all about not getting stung by a Sting Ray.

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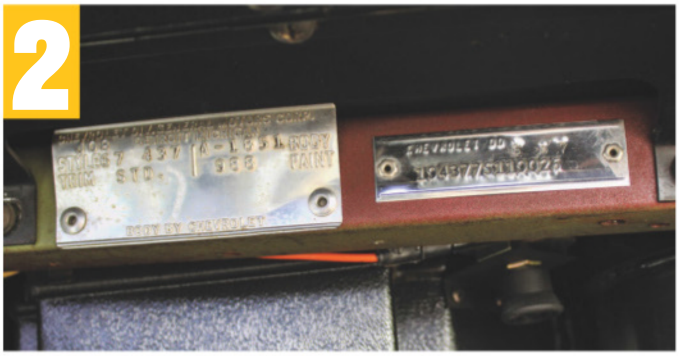

1. **The subject of the inspection is this 1967 Corvette coupe. It's a 327/four-speed car in Marlboro Maroon over black leather. It was offered in ready-to-drive condition, but not as a 100-point concours car, which was exactly what the prospective buyer (and his budget) was looking for.**

2. **First things first: a quick look at the trim and VIN tags, which are located on C2s below the glove box. On the trim tag, the "988" code matches the car's Marlboro Maroon exterior, while the "STD" code indicates the base black vinyl interior. This car, however, has been upgraded with leather seats. We've obscured part of the VIN for the seller's privacy.**

3. Likewise, we're not showing the VIN stamp on the block, but matching it with the VIN tag is fundamental in determining whether it's a numbers-matching car. There's a pad on the front of the engine block, below the edge of the passenger-side cylinder head (arrow), that shows the last six digits of the VIN, which should match the VIN tag, along with another code corresponding with the block's casting details and even its horsepower rating. Unfortunately, it can be virtually impossible to see the pad if the car has factory air conditioning. **4.** There are casting codes on the transmission case, too, but no partial VIN. The "numbers matching" claim, then, can only be confirmed by the engine block. The casting numbers for the transmission and other parts, such as the cylinder heads and intake manifold, can support the originality of the car's powertrain, but only the block has the partial VIN. **5.** All the 327 engines in 1967 were fed by a 585-cfm Holley four-barrel carburetor, which this engine correctly wears. The orange cast iron intake manifold below it is an indicator of the base L75 300-horsepower engine, as the optional L79 327 had an aluminum intake. The base 327 also featured a "Chevrolet" script on the valve covers. One other thing to note in this image is the modern air conditioning compressor, an obvious aftermarket add-on.

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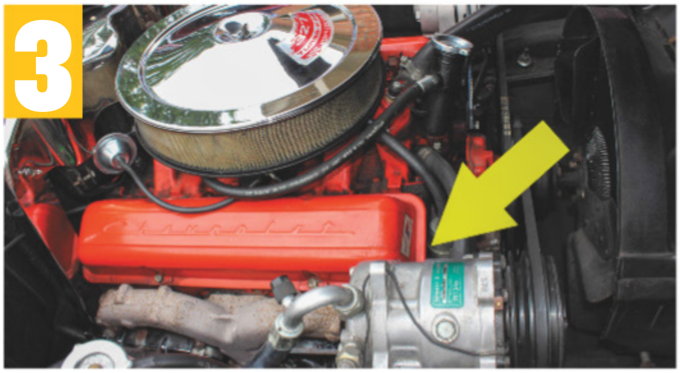

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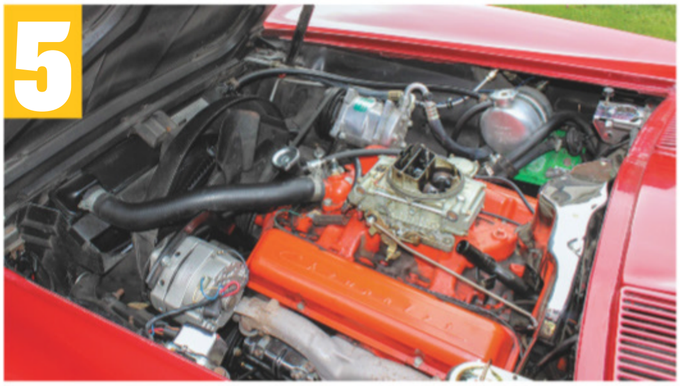

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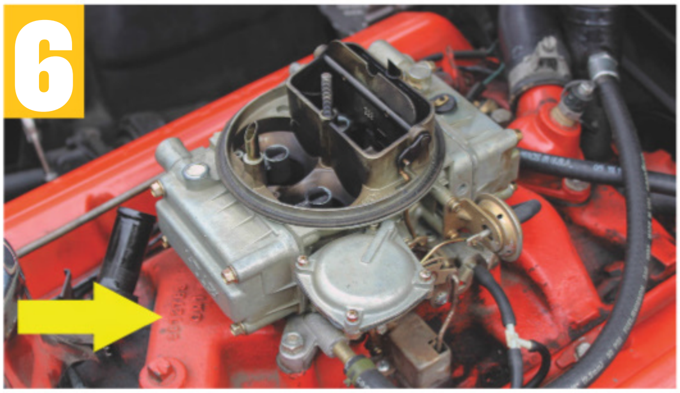

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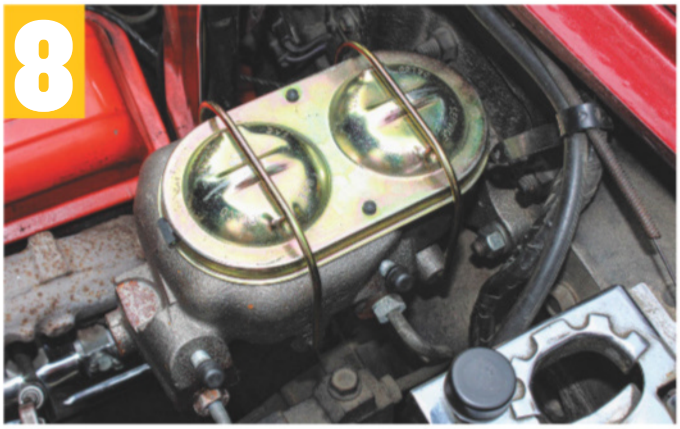
6. Visible in this photo is the "3872783" casting number (arrow) on the intake manifold, which is correct for the 1967 L75. The carburetor's part number is stamped on the upper-right corner of the air horn (not visible here). It is comparatively easy to look up all the important casting and part numbers ahead of the inspection, which is critical if the vehicle in question is presented as being original or restored to original specs. Write down the numbers and bring them to the inspection. **7.** Cooling-system health is a concern for C2 models, as they can run hot even in otherwise optimal conditions. Ask the seller if there's a history of overheating or running hot. Then, let the car idle for an extended period and drive it in stop-and-go traffic during the test drive to check cooling performance. **8.** Power-assisted disc brakes were introduced in 1965 and greatly improved stopping performance, but original-style systems had their issues. Caliper piston seal wear was one of the biggies, along with corrosion of the caliper piston seal surface. Ask the seller if the car still has original-type calipers and whether they've been updated with stainless steel piston sleeves. If they haven't, expect leaks—and have the calipers updated as quickly as possible after the purchase.

8



9. Crawl under the car or put it on a lift to inspect the frame. It should be as solid as possible, with no signs of rust-through or other pervasive corrosion. This example shows surface rust and a bit of scale, but no apparent areas of rust-through. **10.** Even the presence of minor rust issues with a C2 frame should give the buyer pause, because they frequently represent only the tip of the corrosion iceberg. Often the more serious problems lie on top of or inside the frame, which are mostly impossible to detect visually. Repairs are possible, but they are costly and involve removing the body from the frame. **11.** Back to the subject of our inspection, the rear of the frame was dirty from road use, but appeared very solid, with no additional signs of corrosion.

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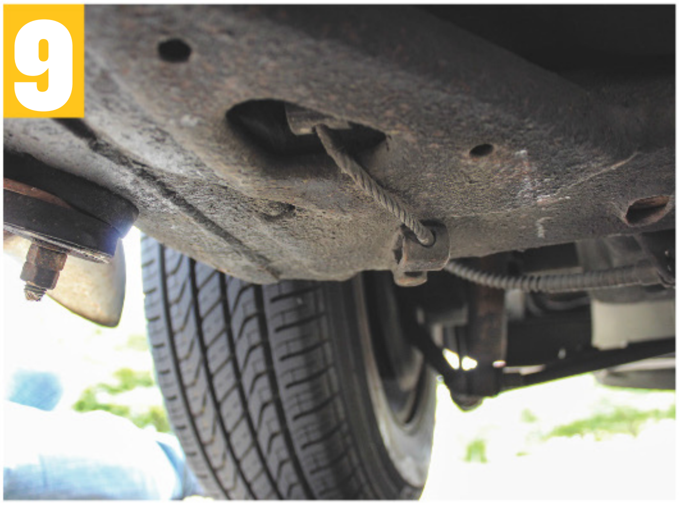

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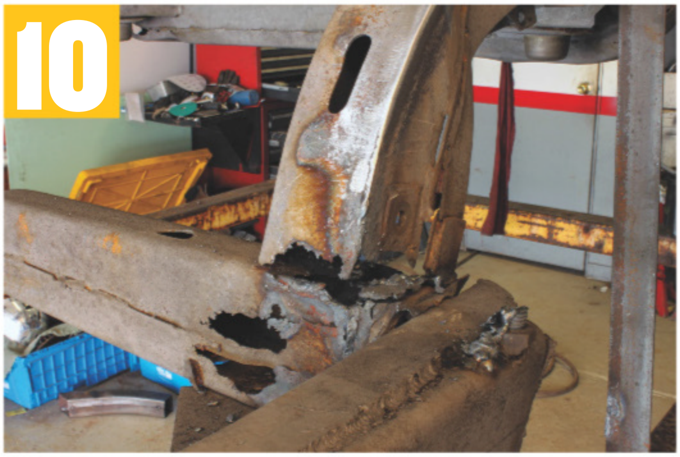

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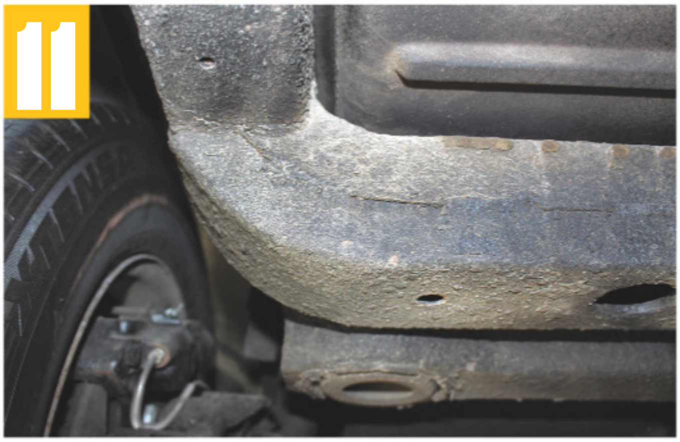

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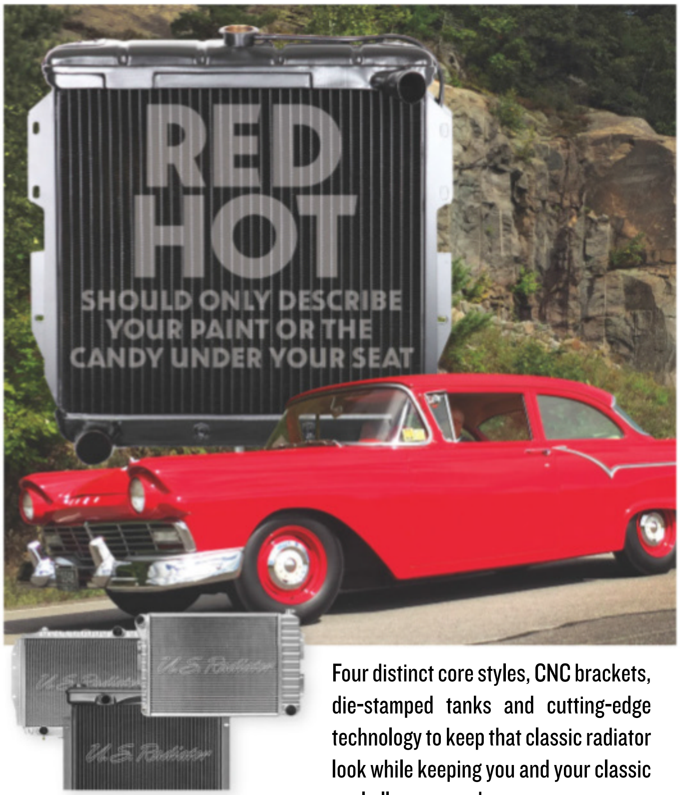
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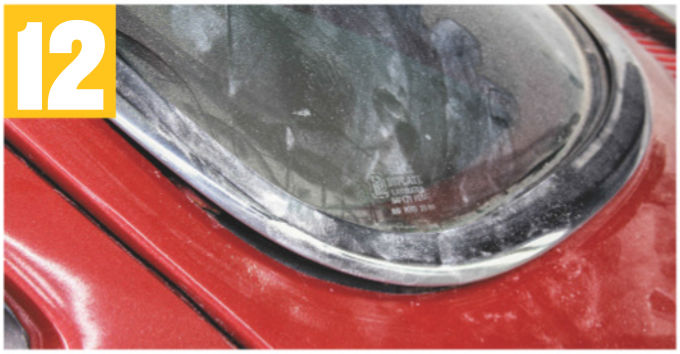
12. **The other area of rust to be concerned with is the birdcage frame around the passenger compartment. It's more difficult to locate, because it's hidden by the car's interior trim, but one of the telltale signs is windshield trim that doesn't fit flush with the body, as seen here. This photo is not the car in the depicted inspection, but is shown as an example of how rust in the birdcage swells the metal to prevent the trim from seating properly.** **13.** **Here's what birdcage rust looks like with the A-pillar trim removed. Again, it can be very difficult to determine on an assembled car, so it's important to look for other clues. Along with the window trim fit, check the lower radiator support channel. If it's rusted, the birdcage may be as well.**

14. **In addition to the frame inspection, time under the car should also include an overview of the suspension components. In this case, it revealed some past-their-prime bushings such as this dried-out and cracked rear spring mount cushion. Replacement is comparatively easy, but it's an identified need for the car.**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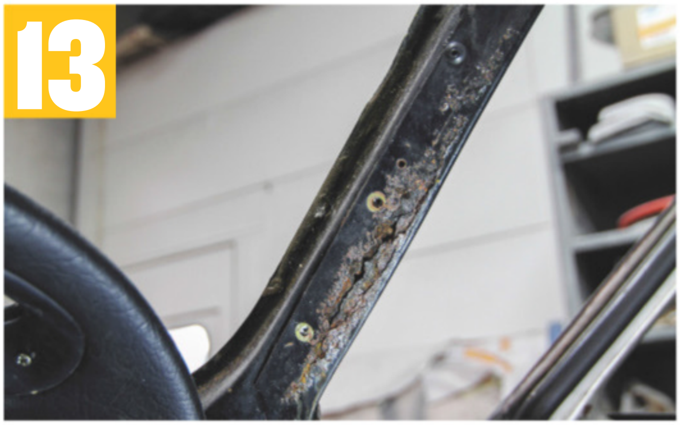
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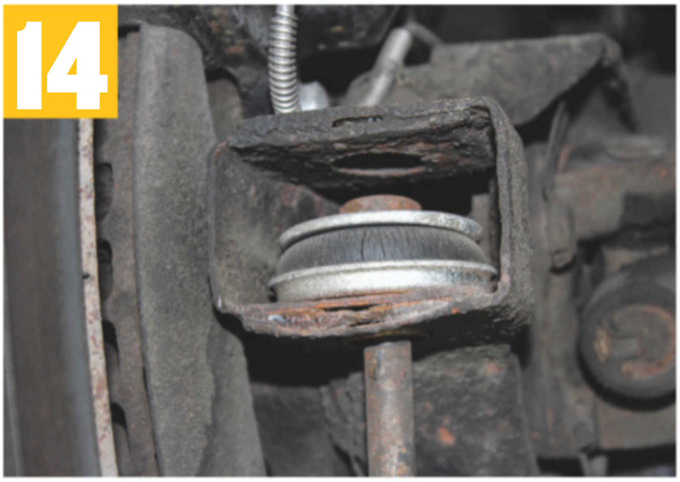
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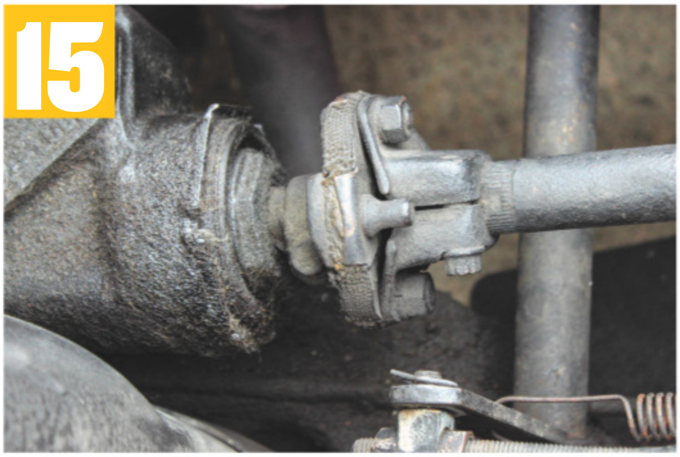
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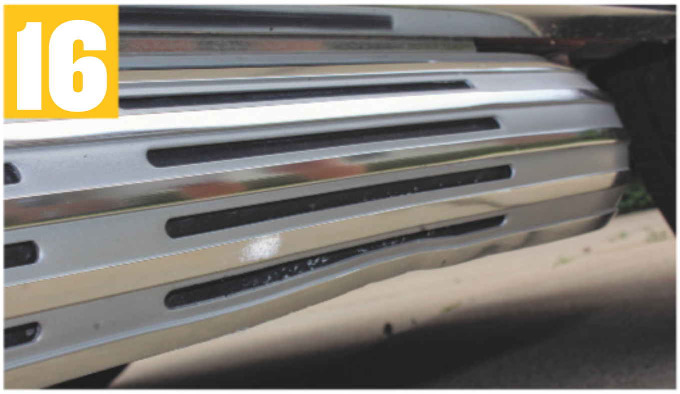
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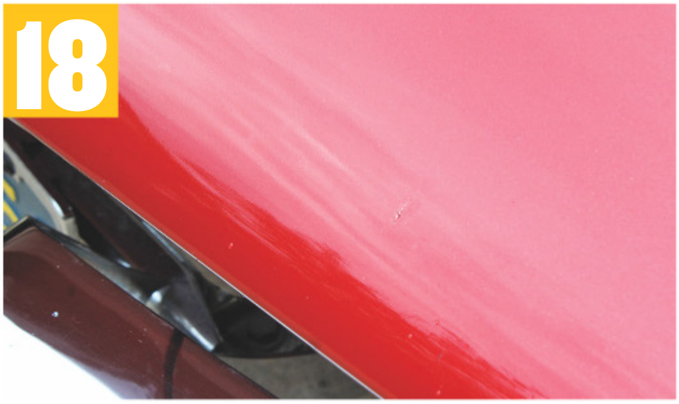
15. **Check the steering coupler (also known as the rag joint), too. It's an often-overlooked part that, if worn or torn, can translate into sloppy steering. This one appeared old, but intact.** **16.** **A dent in one of the side-exhaust covers was also discovered while crawling below the car. Fewer than one in five 1967 Corvettes came from the factory with side exhausts, but in this case, the seller had paperwork indicating they were original on this car.** **17.** **Marlboro Maroon was the original color for this Corvette, but it had been repainted in the past. The finish appeared very good, but the seller did not know the bodywork and/or accident history of the car.**

17

18. One of the obvious clues of a repainted C2 is a comparatively smooth finish of the paintwork, as the lacquer on even well-preserved original-paint cars inevitably shrank and checked over time. There's some orange peel in the finish here (and a few minor blemishes), but none of the characteristics of original lacquer paint. **19.** Fortunately, the body lines and panel gaps of this example showed very well. The factory tolerances were relatively generous in the Sixties, but very wide gaps or gaps that vary in width from top to bottom are generally signs of previous bodywork or accident damage. **20.** Don't forget to check the headlamps' operation and the doors' fit within the body. C2 models had electrically operated headlamps, which were generally less troublesome than the C3's vacuum-operated lights, but the doors' range of motion has to be spot-on. If the doors don't fit properly in their buckets or line up with the body lines, adjustment or repairs are likely necessary—and that can be a pain in the fiberglass.

18



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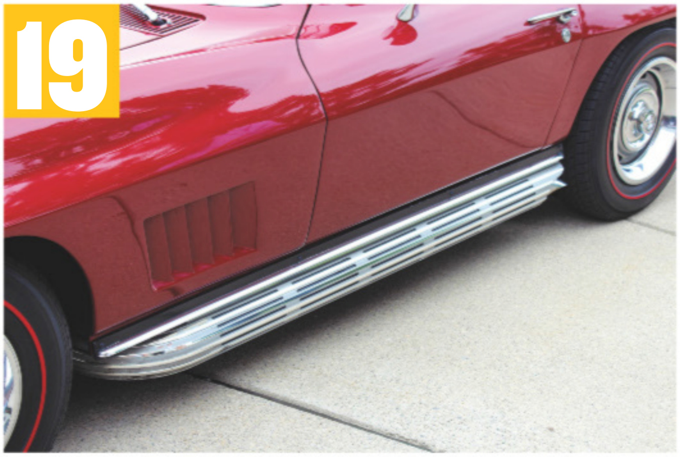

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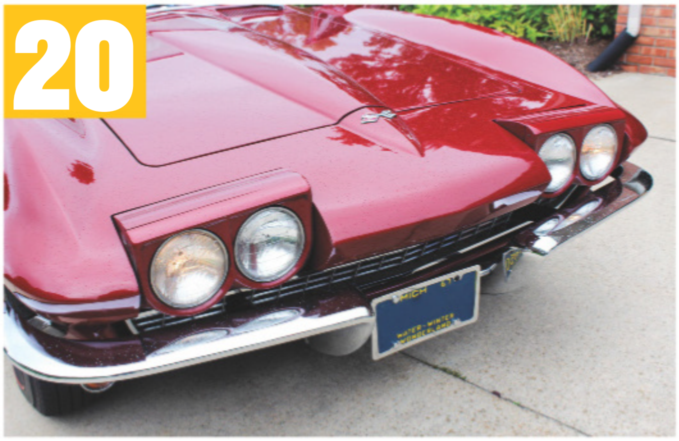

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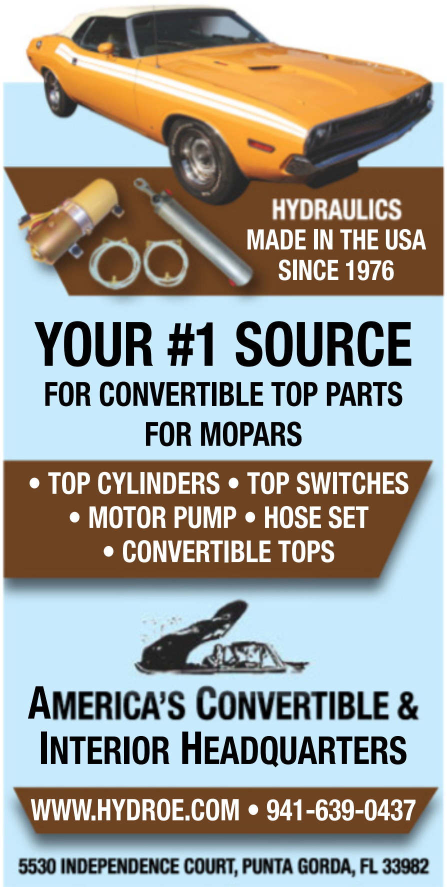
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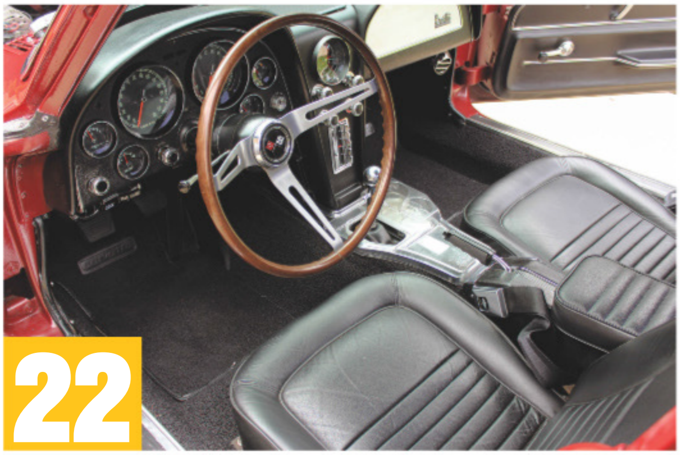
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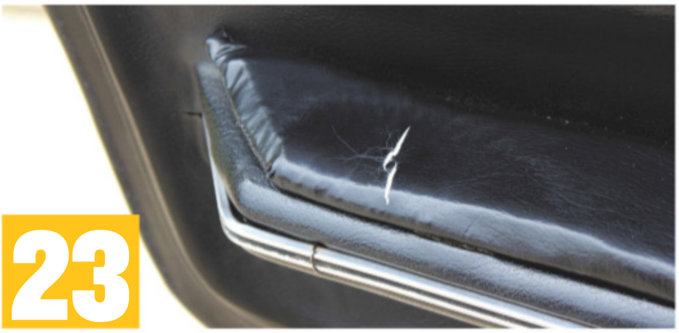
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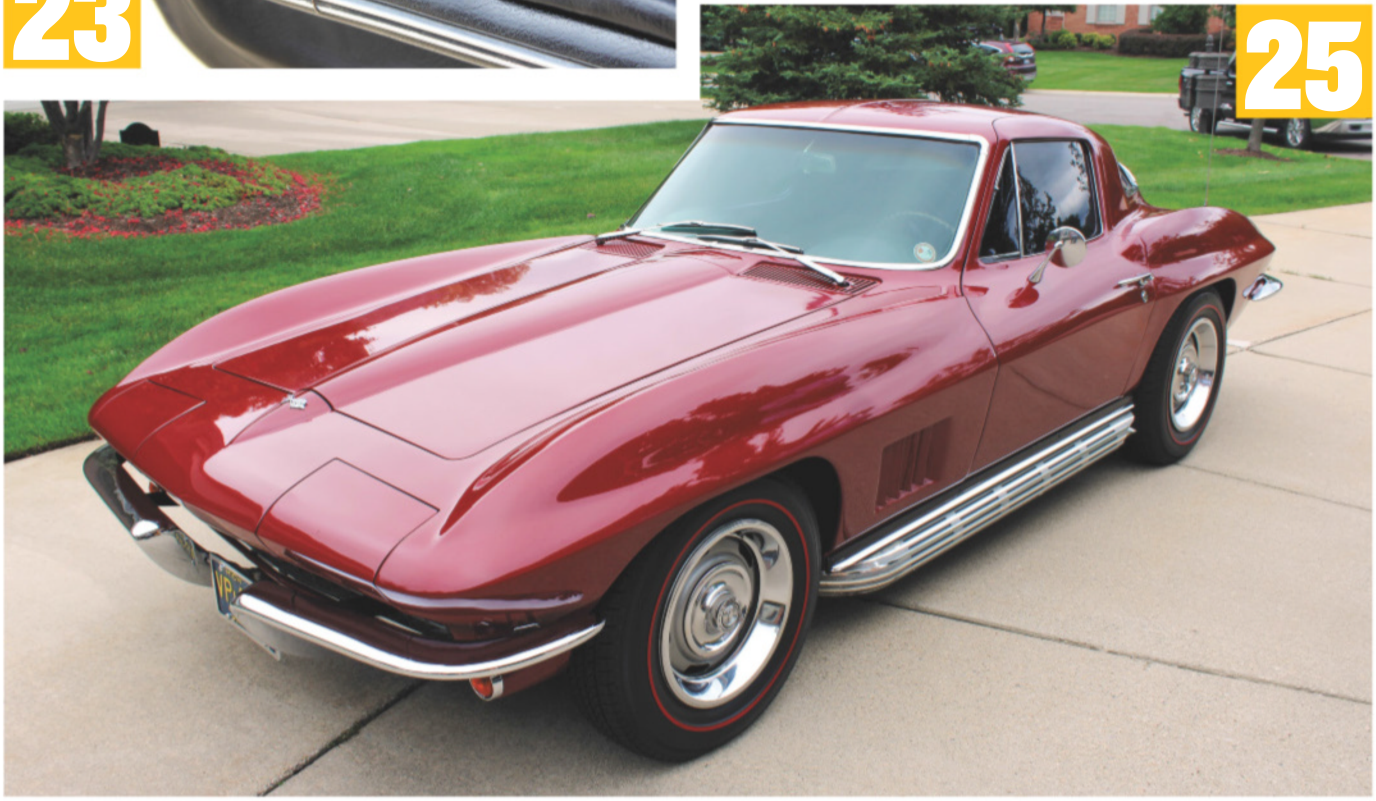
21. Check the age of the tires, too. Vintage Corvettes aren't typically used as daily drivers, so older tires may still look great, with relatively few miles on them. However, if the tires are more than 10 years old, they'll need to be replaced for safe highway driving. **22.** Inside, the cockpit appeared clean and well-kept, with leather seat covers replacing the original vinyl upholstery. The carpet also appeared newer and in very good condition. There was a small crack at the bottom of the steering wheel, but the metal trim around the horn button showed very well, with no apparent pitting. It's also important to make sure all the gauges work, as well as the heater. Pull every knob and push every button. **23.** The door panels appeared in original condition and showed wear on the armrests, including a split on driver's armrest. **24.** There was a small ding on the passenger-side glovebox door trim panel, but the overall condition of the interior was very good. **25.** This 1967 Corvette wasn't a show car, but its apparent condition during the inspection revealed a vehicle that was in excellent driver condition, with a few cosmetic needs that could elevate its presentation even further. Value is always in the eye of the beholder, but the inspection didn't reveal any deal-breaking structural or mechanical flaws. Overall, it appeared ready to roll with a new owner. ■

24
Corvette
STING RAY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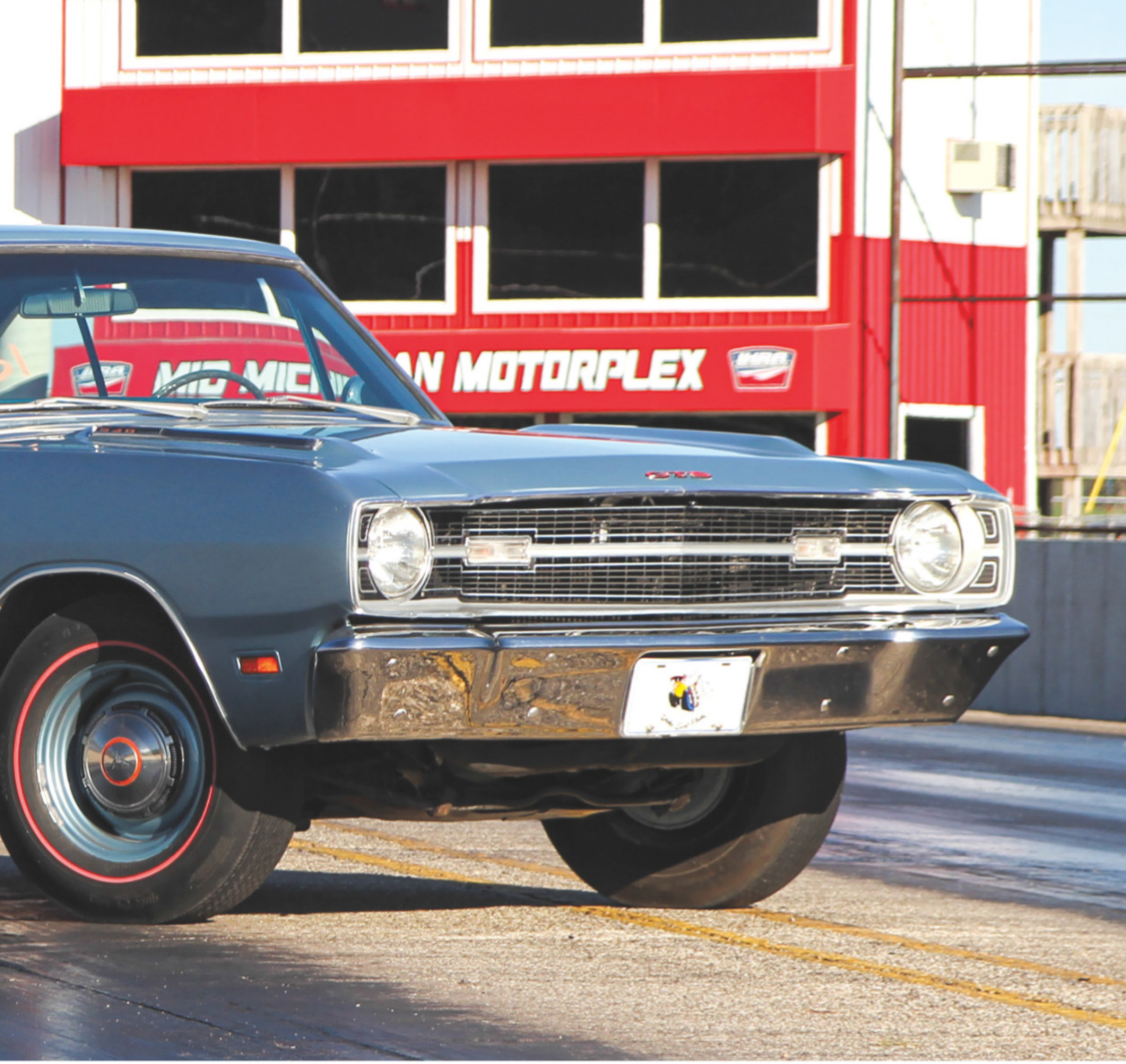
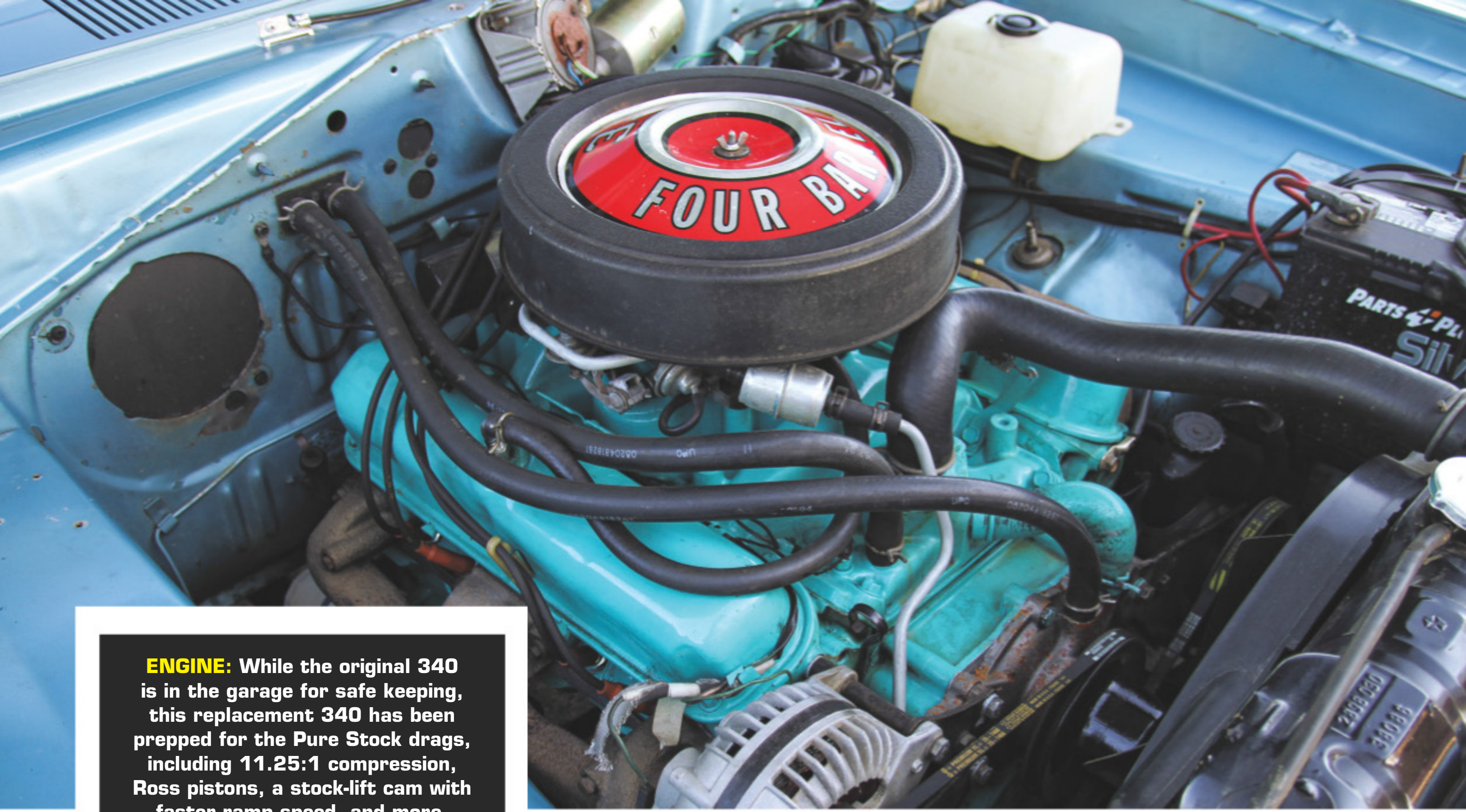
BY JEFF KOCH • PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATTHEW LITWIN



"DAD WAS A MOPAR GUY," Cedar Springs, Michigan's Rich Straub says about his late father, Carl. "He bought a '64 Polara new, a 383 car, then he bought a new '65 Dodge Coronet 500. He didn't like the '66 and '67s, but when the Dart GTS came out, he really liked it."

Dodge's compact A-body Dart had a GT package since its 1963 launch, but this was little more than bucket seats and some trim. For 1968, the new top-of-the-line Dart GTS (or GT Sport, as it's sometimes known) was also treated to stiffer Rallye suspension, a low-restriction air cleaner, chromed exhaust tips, a bumblebee stripe on the tail, a power-bulge hood, plus all of the other spiffs that came with the GT, including bucket seats, styled wheel covers, and full-width trunk trim brightwork.

The heart of the GTS was the new-for-1968 340-cubic-inch V-8. Well, new-ish: While the displacement was new, its bones dated back to Chrysler's "A" engine family of the mid-'50s. Its replacement, the LA engine, launched in 1964, and weighed 55 pounds less thanks to new thin-wall casting techniques, despite having the same external dimensions and bore centers.



ENGINE: While the original 340 is in the garage for safe keeping, this replacement 340 has been prepped for the Pure Stock drags, including 11.25:1 compression, Ross pistons, a stock-lift cam with faster ramp speed, and more.

INTERIOR: A blue Legendary interior replaced the tatty, sunbaked original in the early 1990s and remains presentable today. Floor-shifted automatic encourages consistency.

The LA 273 and the A-series 318 “Poly” shared a crankshaft (and thus a stroke—3.31 inches). Poly heads went away, and the wedge-head 273 gave way to the 318 for the 1968 model year, retaining the 3.31-inch stroke but enlarging the bore to 3.91.

For the hot 340-cube version, Chrysler used a still-larger 4.04 bore in order to encourage deep breathing at high rpm. A suite of upgrades followed, including high-flowing heads with 2.02/1.60-inch valves, a forged steel crank, a specific carburetor on a high-rise dual-plane intake, dual-row timing chain, and a windage tray. Its light weight helped handling, and in an A-body it provided 383-B-body-sized time slips at the track. The 340 was rated at 275 horsepower, but word on the street was that it was good for 50 more than that. For the third year, a version of the B-series 383 V-8 was also available in the Dart GTS, rated at 300 hp for ‘69. Carl’s car was a 1969 383/automatic example and came with some documentation that showed that it had actually been used at the Chrysler proving grounds. “It had some miles when he bought it,” Rich recalls. “He didn’t like the whitewall tires it had on it at the dealership, so they swapped on the redline tires (and wheels) from a new Barracuda they had on the lot.” That car didn’t last long, though, and Rich was young enough that he didn’t remember it coming and going—he only knew of the Dart anecdotally. “I know that he was discouraged with it—it had some spark issues and he ended up selling it. He always complained about having to put plugs in it.”

Decades later, “my brother and I decided we’d find him one.” Rich finally found one in *Hemmings Motor News,* located not far from him in southern Michigan. “It was a great candidate; someone else brought it from Southern California. We got it for $4,000. It was running poorly when we got it; the intake manifold gasket had popped into the valley. We also rebuilt the carb and four-wheel-drum brakes, and changed the cam. The interior was pretty baked from being in California, so we found a dashpad, replaced the headliner, and installed a Legendary interior. We repainted it the original B2 Blue. It didn’t have any rust. It came with bumper guards, and Dad didn’t like those, so when we got the bumpers re-chromed, they removed the guards and welded up the holes before plating. We located some NOS parts for it back when they were easier to find. It was easy to make the car presentable and to put it together.” It arrived with power steering and air conditioning, both of which were shelved thanks to their excess weight. Full wheelcovers

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were swapped out for a set of red-ring Dodge "dog-dish" caps on body-colored steelies.

"And Dad drove it like that for years," Rich says, though he doesn't mean that his father was soft-pedaling it down to the local car show. "When he raced it at the Pure Stock drags, it had the original 100,000-plus-mile 340 in it. Oh, and we put 3.55 gears in it. And he was running 14.30s at 98 mph—the transmission was soft, the engine wasn't rebuilt, and the Pure Stock rules were stricter back then, too." Carl was having fun, but Rich admits, "He wasn't lighting the world on fire." You'd think that after life with a 383 Dart, a 340 would seem somehow less, but... "Dad didn't have an issue with the smaller engine—the plugs were easier to change! Plus, I'd built and run enough 340s that it was a well-running engine."

After a decade or more of fun, though, including entrancing his granddaughter Adriana with rides in that very Dart, Carl found himself in a position where he needed to sell. It went to a buyer half an hour's distance away, but save for once at a local car show, the Straubs never saw the Dart again.

Time marched on, and Carl passed away. Rich's daughters were teenagers and rapidly approaching driving age—not to mention their growing interest in their dad's activities at the track. It was Adriana's idea to try and find her grandpa's Dart to bring it back into the fold. A search, launched in 2017, was far more easily accomplished with modern technology; the Straubs discovered that the Dart was more or less where they had left it. "As it turns out, the guy who bought it from us got cancer shortly after he bought the Dart and couldn't drive it anymore, then he passed. He'd only driven it 400 miles, and all those years later the Dart was still sitting there at his house."

So, in 2017, Rich made a deal and brought it home to Cedar Springs. He found himself going through a car that he'd already gone through more than a quarter-century earlier. "We ended up doing the fuel tank—it sat around long enough that the fuel system got all gummed up and we had to change things to get it running." The four-wheel-drum brakes were also re-serviced at this time. "I wanted to assess the engine and transmission; after I drove it, I didn't think that much had changed."

By now, enough time had passed that a Dart GTS, particularly one with its numbers-matching driveline intact, was a valuable commodity. If Rich intended to prep it for track duty, he'd need to build an engine that took advantage of a revised Pure Stock rulebook. Out went the original 340 to be stashed; in went a prepped mill with attention paid to what Rich initially mentions in passing as "details." When pressed, he reveals: "The new rules allow an additional ¾ of a point of compression, so we got rid of the cast pistons and have a set of 11.25:1 Ross pistons; high-quality pistons are where it's at in the swing assembly. That's a lot of what makes it snappy. We're also using thinner wrist pins, as well as file-fit piston rings instead of just slapping on a set of rings and hoping the end gaps aren't too big."

The heads were also addressed. "We did some port work and cleaned up the bowls a little. But we're using Chevy valves instead of Chrysler valves; they're still stainless 2.02-inch valves in the heads, but the stems on a Chevy valve are thin, plus you can open up a catalog and find 50 sets of Chevy valves to choose from. Choices for Chrysler valves are a lot more limited. And so, we also have different guides in the heads. We're not violating the rules with any of this," Rich says, "we're only violating our pocketbooks."

Tickling those valves is a Bob Karakashian "Mr. Six Pack" camshaft. "It's got the same profile as stock, but with a faster ramp speed. The engine responded really well to that cam." The rear end now runs strip-friendly 4.30 gearing.

L-R: Adriana and her grandpa's Dart; Carolyn and her '71 Hemi Super Bee; Caroline and her '72 Demon 340. All of them are running high 12s. You'll read about the Bee and the Demon in future issues of *HMM*.

For safety's sake, the front drums have been swapped out for a set of factory-spec disc brakes.

The suspension is similarly simple but clever. "You're not supposed to run 90/10 front shocks, so they're just completely worn. There's a set of 50/50 shocks in back; we loosened up the anti-sway bar so there's no resistance in the front, so it throws the weight on the rear tires; we also pop a little weight in the trunk. We use six-cylinder torsion bars too — the thinnest bar is the one to use. It's a little wonky to drive it down the road like this," but Adriana's quarter-mile time slips — 12.90s in cool air — confirm that it works on the quarter-mile.

Along with Adriana driving the Dart, the other members of Rich's family have gotten involved with the Pure Stock drags as well — wife Carolyn runs either a '71 Hemi Super Bee or a survivor '69 Coronet R/T, and younger daughter Caroline runs a '72 Demon 340. Indeed, Rich is so busy prepping the ladies' cars in the pits that he didn't have the bandwidth to run a car himself in 2022. "I'm changing carb jets in one car while someone's whispering in my ear to work on another one... I was busy enough. But watching my wife and kids having fun doing something that I've done forever... I don't even care that I'm not out there racing. I enjoy watching them out there more than I enjoy doing it myself."

When the Dart isn't out campaigning, the Straubs are positively evangelical about the joy of old cars. "We sponsor a car show here in Cedar Springs, and the Dart is out there every other weekend. We're always trying to get kids involved." But tougher than getting kids into it is getting adults to believe what this Dart GTS is capable of. "It's been to MCACN a few times, in the Pure Stock display. [Whether there or at our local show] lots of people walk away not believing how fast it is." You can almost hear Rich shrug over the phone. "The timeslips are there. People can watch the videos on YouTube. But it's not much to look at under the hood, I guess. A turquoise engine and exhaust manifolds just aren't that flashy." They're not, but they would have made Carl, a Mopar guy, proud. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

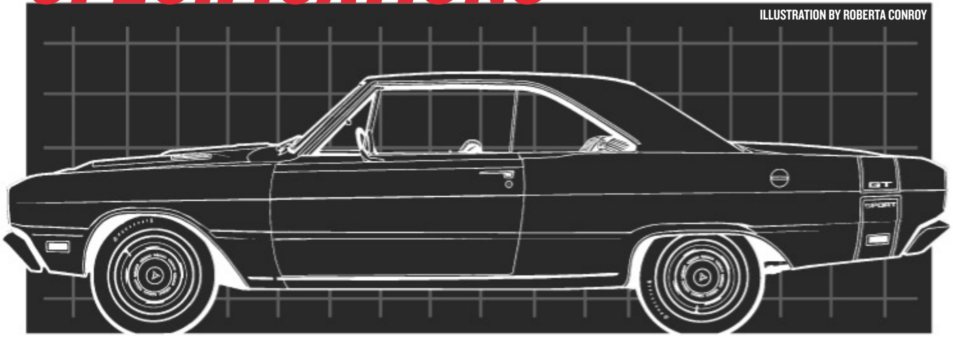


ILLUSTRATION BY ROBERTA CONROY

1969 DODGE DART GTS

PRICE

Base price	$3,226
Options on car profiled	Air conditioning (removed), $361; power steering (removed), $33

ENGINE

Block type	Chrysler LA-series OHV V-8, cast-iron block and cylinder heads
Displacement	340 cubic inches
Bore x stroke	4.04 inches x 3.31 inches
Compression ratio	10.5:1 (Currently 11.25:1)
Horsepower @ rpm	275 @ 5,000
Torque @ rpm	340 lb-ft @ 3,200
Camshaft	.430/.444-in lift, 268/276 degrees duration (stock)
Valvetrain	Hydraulic valve lifters
Main bearings	5
Fuel system	Carter AVS four-barrel carburetor
Lubrication system	Pressure, gear-type pump
Electrical system	12-volt
Exhaust system	High-flow exhaust manifolds and dual exhaust

TRANSMISSION

Type	Chrysler 727 Torqueflite three-speed automatic
Ratios	1st/2.45:1 ... 2nd/1.45:1 ... 3rd/1.00:1 ... Reverse/2.57:1

DIFFERENTIAL

Type	Mopar 8¾ housing with Sure-Grip limited-slip differential
Ratio	3.55:1 (Currently 4.30:1)

STEERING

Type	Manual recirculating ball
Ratio	24:1
Turning circle	38.7 feet

BRAKES

Type	Hydraulic Front: 10-in drum (Currently 10.79-in optional disc) Rear: 10-in drum

SUSPENSION

Front	Independent, unequal length control arms, six-cylinder torsion bars, worn telescoping shock absorbers
Rear	Semi-elliptic leaf springs; telescoping shock absorbers

WHEELS & TIRES

Wheels	Stamped steel, drop-center Front/Rear: 14 x 5.5 inches
Tires	Goodyear Wide Tread, red stripe Front/Rear: E70-14

PRODUCTION

Dodge built 6,700 Dart GTS hardtops for the 1969 model year.

PERFORMANCE

0-60 mph	n/a sec
1/4-mile ET	12.9 sec @ 106 mph*

**Source: owner timeslips*

ACTING ON IMPULSE

INTERMITTENT WIPERS FOR CLASSIC MACHINES

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHUCK HANSON

WHO HASN'T DRIVEN THEIR CLASSIC ON A drizzly or misty day and been annoyed by the archaic two-speed wiper system that's either too fast or too slow for the prevailing conditions? Reaching for the wiper switch and toggling it on and off gets old in a hurry, plus there's the extra wear and tear on the switch and related electrical system and components. But right around the time the muscle car era was just getting underway, relief from the irritating responsibilities of wiper control was also being addressed.

We all have Robert Kearns, an engineer and relentless garage tinkerer, to thank for creating the impulse wiper system back in the mid-Sixties. His invention was so radical, however, that when the engineers at Ford Motor Company first saw it, they were convinced he was activating the prototype by a hidden switch and asked him to leave the room while they inspected his invention. Once convinced of its feasibility, Ford's decision makers (and those of other car companies) soon offered Kearns' concept in their new-car option lists.

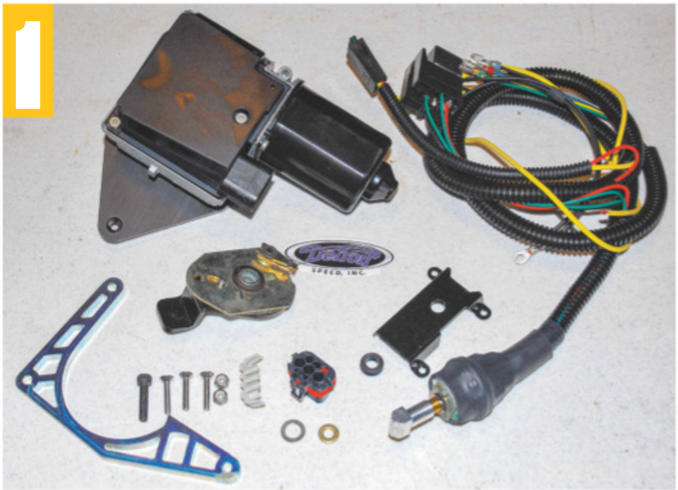
Today, Kearns' invention is ubiquitous enough that virtually all cars have standard equipment windshield wipers offering a varying number of blade speeds, allowing us to contend with any type of precipitation, from a drizzle to a downpour.

The opportunity to retrofit classic machines with this technology was recognized by Detroit Speed & Engineering (DSE), which designed its Selecta-Speed wiper kits for many of the muscle era's popular models. These kits are designed to provide a bolt-in replacement for the stock two-speed wiper motor, offering a relatively simple way to upfit your ride with a seven-speed *(high, low, and five delays)* impulse wiper system. The updated wiper system should vastly improve your ability to navigate through any kind of weather.

The kits currently available fit a variety of popular muscle machines, with still more applications currently in the design stages. A universal system is also offered for more esoteric vehicles, making this a feasible upgrade for anyone willing to do a bit of engineering and adapting on their own. DSE's reputation for crafting well-designed and constructed componentry for a variety of applications is evident here, as the Selecta-Speed impulse wiper kits provide all the necessary hardware and detailed instructions. All you need is the inclination and expertise to install them.

We ordered one for a Chevelle, and managed to complete its installation in an afternoon using only basic hand tools. While there may be minor variances that are unique to each installation, the basic procedure is pretty much the same for all custom designed applications. Without question, the impulse wiper kit is another upgrade that makes cruising in any classic machine that much more enjoyable, regardless of the weather conditions.

1. **The Selecta-Speed impulse wiper system for the Chevelle includes a new wiper motor, a multi-position switch with wiring harness, and all the other pieces and hardware to make it work. 2. A universal kit allows installation into vehicles that are not covered by one of DSE's application-specific kits. It includes everything needed to make it work, including an adapter plate that can be modified/trimmed to match the firewall opening. 3. The mounting plate is the biggest difference between the custom and universal kits. Obviously, the plate will have to be modified to conform to the firewall configuration, and the transmission arm will have to be positioned properly to align with the rest of the linkage. Sealing the unit to the firewall shouldn't present any difficulty.**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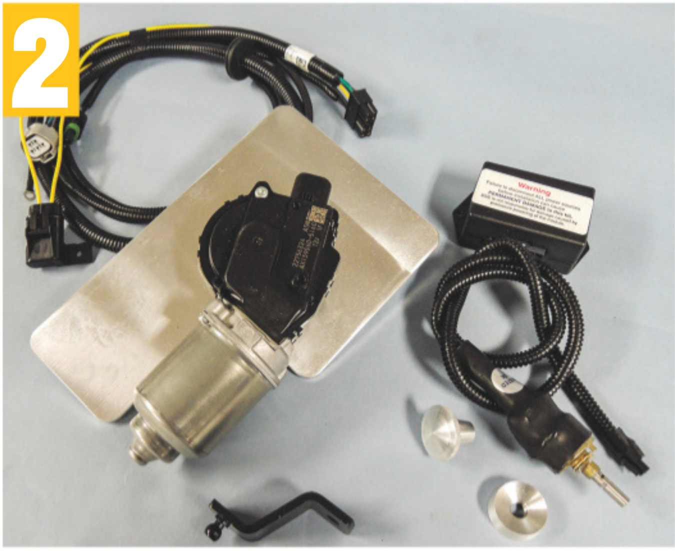
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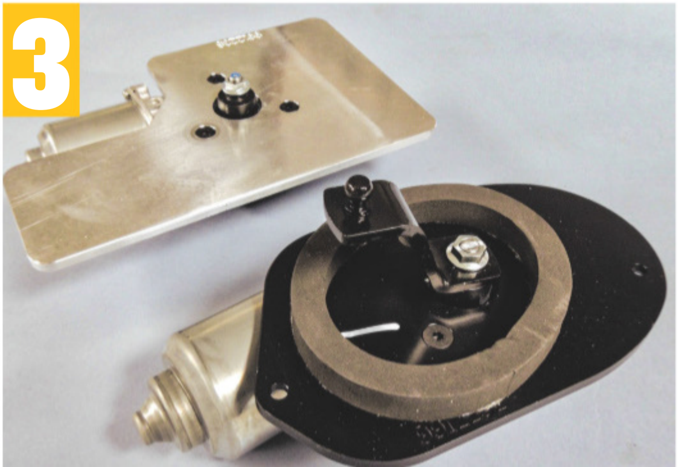
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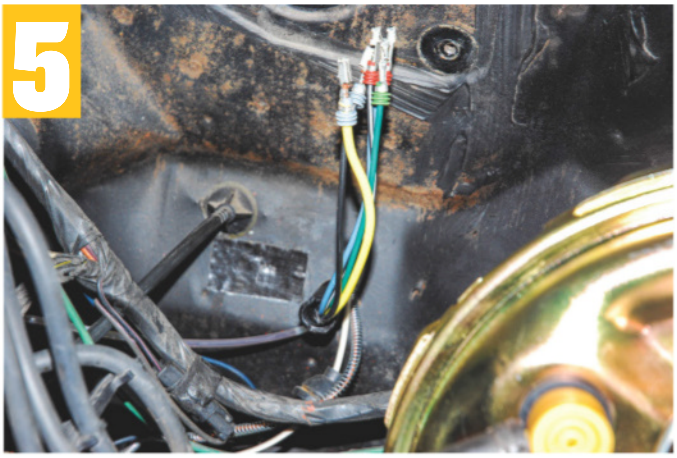
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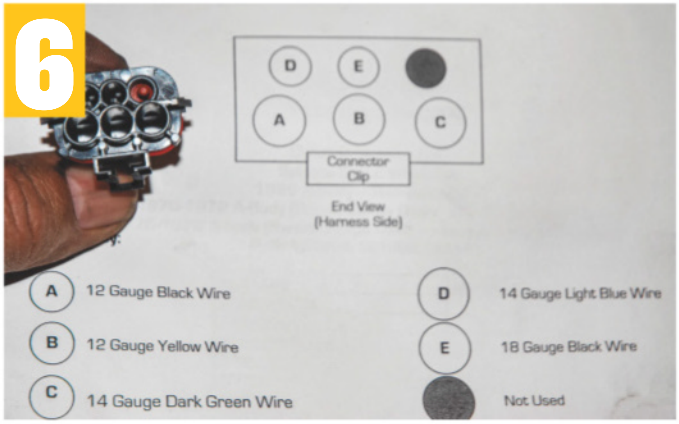
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A	12 Gauge Black Wire	D	14 Gauge Light Blue Wire
B	12 Gauge Yellow Wire	E	18 Gauge Black Wire
C	14 Gauge Dark Green Wire	●	Not Used

4. After disconnecting the wiper transmission arms, wiring, and washer hoses, remove the three small bolts that retain the wiper motor to the firewall and remove it as an assembly. 5. Some kits require the wires to be installed into a Weather Pack connector, so we located an existing hole in the firewall right below the wiper motor location and threaded our new wiring harness through it. Once our installation was complete, we filled the hole with RTV to seal it and prevent any wire chafing. 6. Kits that require the Weather Pack connector include a wiring diagram showing the proper location of the pins in the connector.

7. Once the pins are properly inserted into the connector, a locking clip holds them securely in place.
8. The new attaching screws are stainless steel and attach to the existing steel nut plates on the firewall. Because they are dissimilar metals, applying anti-seize compound will prevent the fasteners from galling, and facilitate their installation and possible future removal.
9. The new wiper motor assembly bolts up to the firewall using the existing mounting holes. All custom kits will have the motor properly "clocked" to ensure linkage compatibility and alignment.

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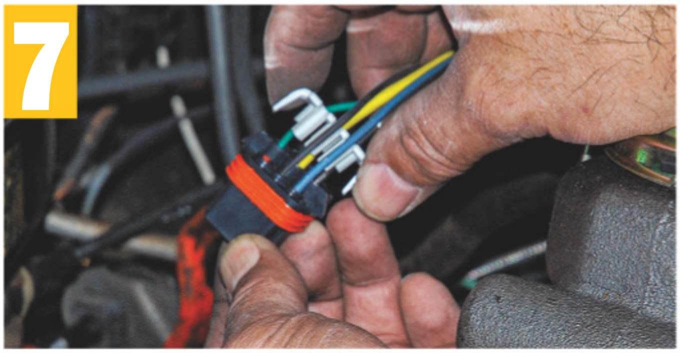

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NEVER-SEEZ
The Cure of Prevention

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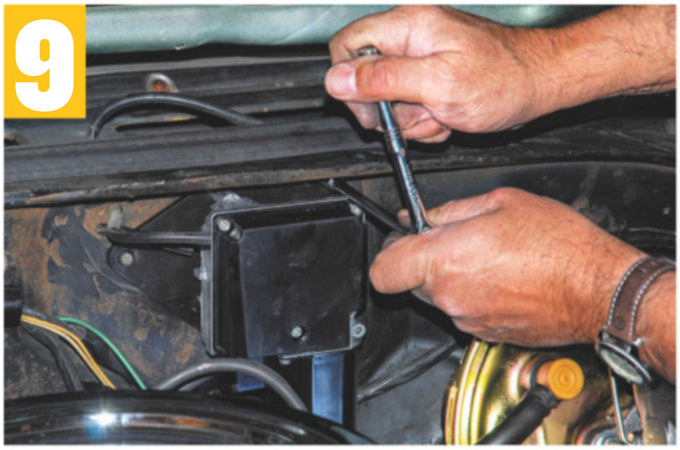

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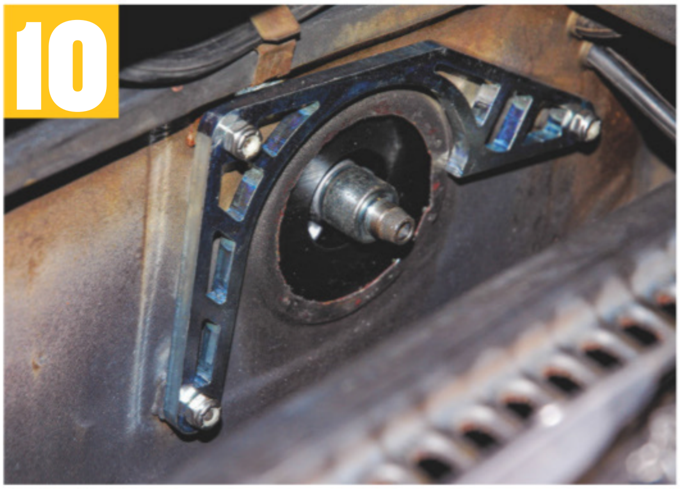

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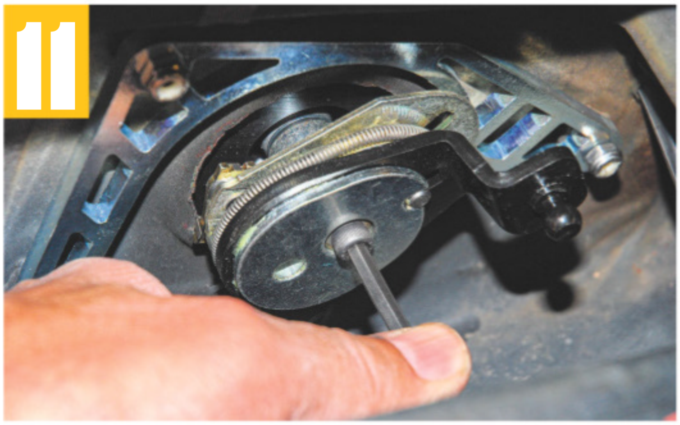

10. This Chevelle has the optional "hidden" wipers and requires special hardware to retain that function. With the new motor assembly mounted, the trigger plate bolts up to the backside using the three provided #10-24 self-locking nuts. **11.** Once the trigger plate is secured, check for adequate clearance with the firewall opening, and attach the new Pitman arm assembly with a ¼-inch cap screw.
12. A new multi-position switch that controls the wiper motor operation is included in the kit, along with an adapter that facilitates mounting it in the dash.

12

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13. After removing the factory switch from the dash, the DSE switch attaches in the factory location using the original hardware. **14.** Once the new switch is secured to the dash, the billet knob is indexed to the flat spot on the shaft, and then secured with the small Allen-head socket screw. **15.** Now the harness can be plugged into the receptacle located next to the wiper motor armature.

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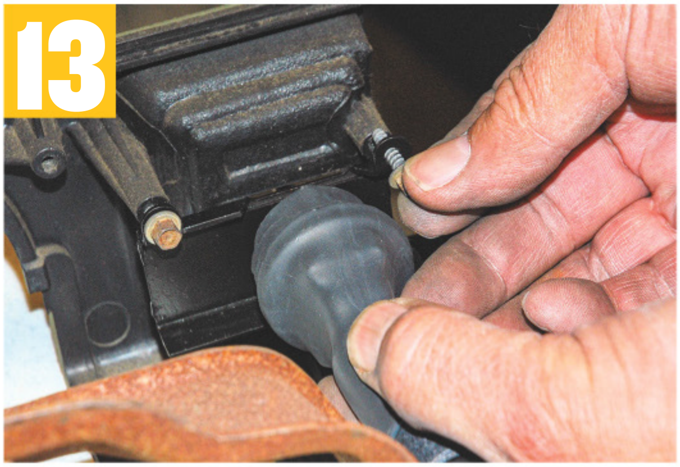

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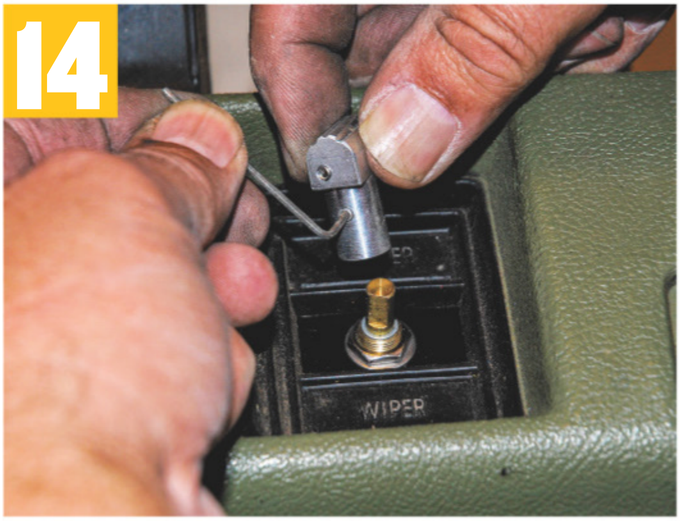

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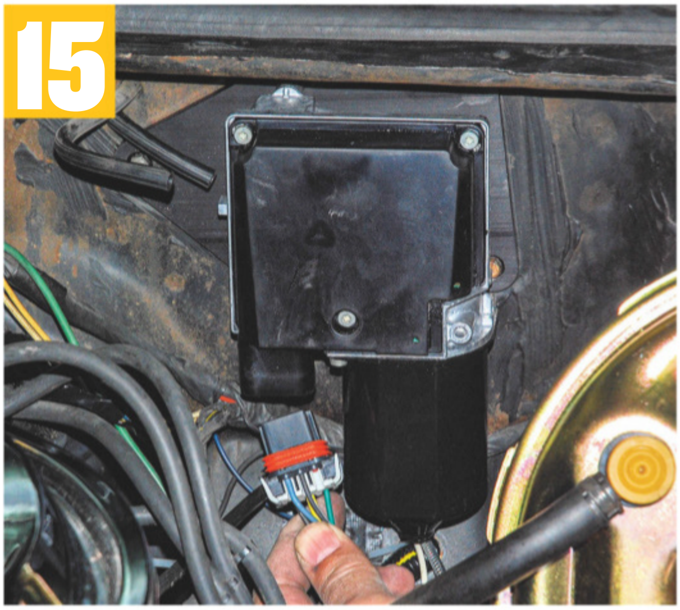

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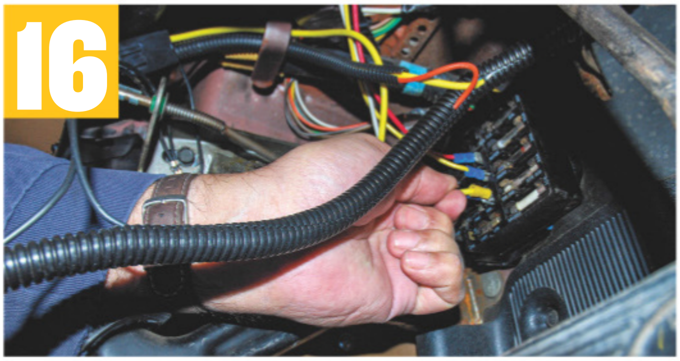

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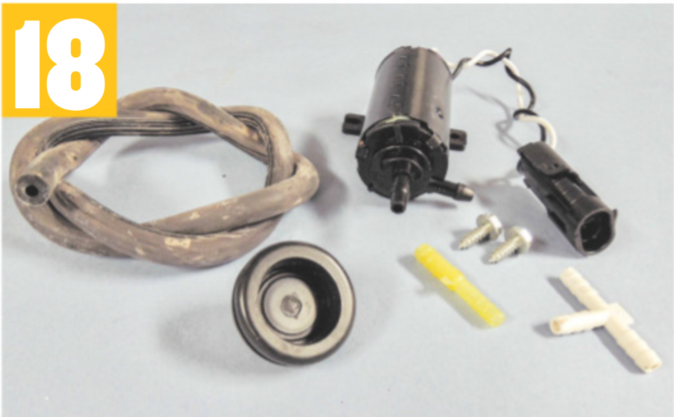

16. Providing power for the new wiper motor is pretty basic; the yellow wire connects to a switched 12-volt source in the fuse box, while the black leads attach to a solid, metal ground under the dash. We used an existing screw on the parking-brake assembly. **17.** Once the wiring is set, test the wiper motor through its operational range, and if there are no problems, reattach the wiper transmission arm. Put a dab of grease on the ball of the Pitman arm and the socket of the transmission arm for lubrication and to prevent squeaks. **18.** The windshield washer system is an integral part of many of the discarded factory wiper motor setups, so DSE designed a stand-alone system that plugs right into the replacement wiring harness and is operated by the same switch that controls the wiper operation. ■

SOURCES:

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ASK RAY

By Ray Bohacz

BACK TO BASICS

Q: The "Temperature Gauge" question in your column from the June issue of *HMM* is a familiar problem. My car is a 1966 Chevy SS with factory gauges. According to the gauge, it ran cold all the time after replacing the sending units, checking proper function of the gauge, and making other wire checks. I was running a non-clutch fan with a 160-degree thermostat. I then decided to take out the thermostat and replace it with a unit rated for 180 degrees. Upon removing the thermostat, I found that it had separated. I replaced it and then all the problems went away — the car runs well now and the factory gauge reads near the middle of the scale, which is expected. I do not know if this will help the reader with the 1967 Corvette problem or not.

Wayne Roache
Via email

A: *The issue you had is not specific to Chevys, but it is the foundation for a lesson to other readers. When diagnosing any problem, I used to teach a term I came up with: SAT, or Stop And Think.*

You need to think through how the system in question functions and consider its potential problem areas; you should not replace a sensor or gauge without confirmation of the issue. Another common mistake seen often today is to assume that, because a part is new or recently replaced, it is good. Parts that are bad out of the box, or that fail prematurely, are sadly common today.

RUN-ON AMX

Q: I've been reading your column since the beginning of *HMM*. I'm the original owner of a 1968 AMX. In late 2019 it started dieseling when I shut it off. I had been using premium gas without ethanol from pumps that had three "flavors" from one hose. I have switched to a single pump that dispenses 91 octane only (with no ethanol). I have recently had the Holley 4150 rebuilt, and it still has the problem. The engine is a 390 and was rebuilt about 10 years ago. I have had several solutions given to me about what to do short of switching to another brand engine, which I will not do. The plugs look clean and the timing has been checked. I would hate to part with this car after almost 55 years of ownership and all the memories that I have accumulated.

I hope this can be rectified, so if anyone other than me gets to drive it, they will know how to deal with the problem.

John D.
Via email

A: *Thank you for being such a long-time reader of my ramblings. Let me begin by putting your mind at ease. There is no reason for you to part with your beloved AMX after all of these years for a simple run-on issue.*

Dieseling of a gasoline engine occurs due to either the idle speed being too high, or because the pistons/combustion chambers are holding heat. Historically, it is usually a combination of both when dealing with an older engine — even if the idle speed is excessive, the engine should shut off when the ignition is killed.

Based on the age of the engine (even though it was rebuilt 10+ years ago), my opinion is that the piston crowns are carbon-laden and holding heat, and that is igniting the fuel.

This is what I suggest you do: Soak the pistons with GM Upper Engine and Fuel Injection Cleaner — this product is the modern version of the old GM Top Engine Cleaner.

The process is simple but messy. With the engine cold, remove all of the spark plugs and disable the negative lead of the coil (to the distributor). Pour about one to two ounces of the GM product into each cylinder. The bores at TDC will take less and the ones at BDC would accept more, but as long as you can get an ounce or a little more in, that will be fine. Let it sit at the least overnight. Some of the cleaner will leak past the piston rings, so if you are going to let it soak longer (a few days), you may need to top all the bores up again. Purchase enough of the product to do that.

Then, with the spark plugs still out, turn the engine over by hand in the direction of its normal rotation to push out any liquid. You are doing this so that you do not hydro-lock the engine. If you want to use the starter, just bump it or the chemical will spray all over the under-hood area, the fender paint, and so on. That is why I want you to disable the ignition — the product is flammable.

When you determine that there is no liquid left in the bores, reinstall the spark plugs and reconnect the coil.

However, before you attempt to start the engine, it is important that you drain the engine oil and change it, along with the filter; you do not want any of the cleaner to be in the crankcase when the engine starts.

With fresh oil, start the engine and take the car for an aggressive ride. If it is full of carbon, it will smoke quite a bit as it is burned off. Do not be concerned with the smoke. It will eventually disappear.

Depending on how carbon-laden the pistons are, you may need to do this again. I would then follow up with a high rate of Chevron Techron Complete Fuel System Cleaner in the gas tank. You need to drive the car, though, and burn through the tank of treated fuel. That is the problem with most collector cars: they are not driven enough for any in-tank product to do anything. The Techron will do nothing sitting in the gas tank and carburetor bowl.

Doing this job is easy, but again, it is messy. I am well convinced that if you follow my instructions, the problem will be gone. To break it down to the simplest cause of your issue: It is heat that is igniting the gasoline and causing the engine to run on.

IN THE CLUTCH

Q: Your depth of knowledge is outstanding and appreciated. As a 20-year-old in the mid '70s, I was ecstatic to get a five-year-old 1970 Chevelle with the 350/300-hp engine, a four-speed with 11-inch clutch, bucket seats, and console at an AMC dealer's lot. It was factory original, and not so unusual at that time.

Like a lot of kids then, I bumped the compression some and added a little more cam and a set of headers. Thinking I might need more clutch holding power, I got an aftermarket clutch disc and diaphragm-style pressure plate. Even for a 20-year-old, that pressure plate gave me leg cramps. So, out it came and back in went the original pressure plate. About a month later, the aftermarket clutch disc came apart on a power shift, so back in went the original GM disc. Now, 52 years later, that Chevelle still has its original clutch/pressure plate, after going behind a 283, a straight-six, another 350, and (currently) a stock 396. It even went in front of a couple Muncie gearboxes and one Saginaw, and it is still working flawlessly!

In 1986, I saved a Cranberry Red 1970 Chevelle SS 396 from the crusher. The car was missing about 75-percent of its parts, including all its steering gear and powertrain. I basically got a body shell and frame. As used car parts and new GM parts were still readily available then, this Chevelle went back together quickly and without a lot of expense. Wanting similar clutch performance as demonstrated by my first Chevelle, I ordered a new GM 11-inch clutch and diaphragm pressure plate from a Chevy dealer. I also found a new flywheel from an LS6 crate engine and picked up a used aluminum Chevy bellhousing somewhere, to go with a 454. However, even with these new GM clutch parts, I have always experienced clutch chatter, and now, after 36 years and about 7,000 miles, I am finally ready to try to remedy it.

I hope you have some experience with this issue. The chatter is practically nonexistent when on level ground, moving out at idle, or slightly feathering the throttle in first or reverse. However, on any kind of grade that requires a little more energy to move the load from a standstill, the chatter is somewhat severe, so you have to rev it up a lot and really slip the clutch to get around the severe chatter. Once moving, all shifts up and down are flawless. Perhaps the clutch disc has a harder section, which does not compress equally, or the pressure plate is not engaging equally, causing a one-sided pressure point or...? What input can you give?

Duane Gomish
Somewhere in Pennsylvania

A: *First, thank you for the kind words. Most — if not all — chatter and clutch problems are experienced from a dead stop, with any incline just exacerbating the issue.*

Since this problem has been there from when you put the car together, my hunch is that the flywheel is not true. It is essential for the flywheel and entire clutch assembly to be true and the surfaces parallel.

As an aside, every new flywheel, brake rotor, or brake drum needs to be turned on the appropriate machine to eliminate any warping that occurred from manufacturing or shipping.

I would begin by pulling the transmission out and having the flywheel turned, then ask the shop to write down how much it was out and what they needed to cut to make it true. I would also inspect the pilot bearing and, if there are any dowels that need to be on the bellhousing for alignment, make sure they are there.

Though the thoughts you had in the other areas are possible, the most likely cause is run-out on the flywheel. Keep in mind, though, that this situation has gone on for 36 years, and if I am correct, the disc may have worn to the environment it lived in, much like the effect of walking crooked in a bad pair of shoes for a long period of time.

Please let me know what you find. ■

Send your troublesome tech questions to: askray@hemmings.com
or Ask Ray, P.O. Box 2000,
Bennington, VT 05201

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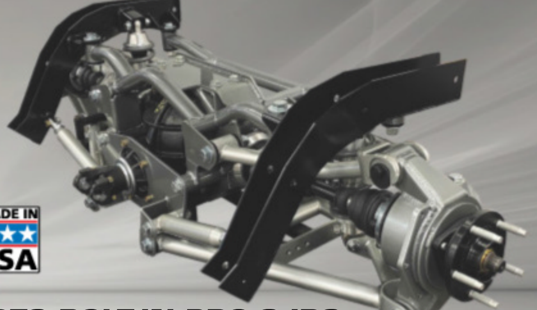

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SWAP MEET

By Jim O'Clair

MOPAR 46RH TRANSMISSION ALIGNMENT

Q: I have a 1994 Jeep Grand Cherokee with 5.2-liter V-8, and the problem I am having is that the 46RH transmission's intermediate shaft is not sliding all the way into the overdrive hub unit. I've been trying to get the two units aligned so they will bolt together flush; I am off by just a small distance, but they will not quite slide together. Any ideas?

Karl Zebe
Via hemmings.com

A: *We think the most likely explanation is that the sun gear and the planetary behind the overdrive clutch drum assembly have become misaligned. The 46RH uses several different assemblies, depending on the application, and the difference is the number of friction and steel plates inside the drum, but they all have the same potential for this problem. When the two splines are not aligned properly, the intermediate shaft will not bottom out — even though it mates with the splines on the sun gear, it will not slide in all the way. The only way to realign them is to remove the overdrive drum and press the assembly apart. This is a difficult operation and can be dangerous. It requires a bearing press and special tools, an intermediate shaft alignment tool, and a three-legged adapter for your bearing press that contracts the 600 pound spring behind the clutches inside the overdrive assembly. Once the unit is compressed, you can remove the two snap rings that hold the assembly together and then release the compressed assembly very, very slowly. From there, you can remove and replace the clutches if needed and use the alignment tool to line up both sets of splines. Leave the alignment tool in place while you recompress the 600 pound spring and replace the inner and outer retaining rings. Be careful handling the overdrive planetary while reassembling so your splines stay aligned until you can re-install the overdrive and bolt the two units together. Leave the alignment tool in place until the very last minute. This fix might be best handled by a transmission shop or machine shop because it could be dangerous to the technician and nearby equipment if the press slips or is released too quickly and the 600 pound spring gets loose. Do not attempt without the proper tools. There are several YouTube videos as well that show how this fix is done.*

DCE AND VOE PERFORMANCE MUFFLERS

Q: I want to upgrade my Chevelle dual-exhaust system to something like the 1970 GTO vacuum-operated exhaust mufflers. Does anyone still manufacture them?

Ralph Worthy
Via email

A: *Pontiac offered an adjustable muffler system for the 1970 GTO that was called vacuum-operated exhaust, or VOE, with the off-road W-73 option package. The muffler used a dashpot-controlled adjusting rod on the front of the muffler case that moved the exhaust baffles inside the muffler open to "Tiger Mode," or the baffles could be closed for quiet mode depending on vacuum supplied to the dashpot from a dash switch. Originally, the option was only purchased for about 250 cars before it was discontinued. Only a handful of the W-73-optioned cars were equipped with an automatic transmission.*

The idea was resurrected by Joe and Julie Tonietto at Waldron's Exhaust in Michigan about a decade ago as VOE-2 mufflers, which is their driver-controlled exhaust (DCE) system. Joe has since retired but the mufflers are still available from Waldron's. A Canadian company called Motivair now offers a similar VOE-2 unit, which will retrofit to many muscle car exhaust systems. They both use a push/pull switch that is mounted under the dash.

Pertronix/Smithy Performance Mufflers also offers an electrically controlled glasspack muffler called Varaflow that achieves similar results using an electric motor and internal valving.

Waldron's Exhaust
800-503-9428 • waldronexhaust.com
Motivair Exhaust
800-720-7408 • motivair.com
Smithy Performance Mufflers
909-599-5955 • pertronixbrands.com

AIR-COOLED FORD-O-MATIC

Q: I just purchased a 1952 Mercury with a two-speed Ford-O-Matic transmission. Can an external oil cooler be attached to these models, and if so, how would I find which ports to use?

Ray Kent
Via hemmings.com

A: *The air-cooled Ford-O-Matics used a finned torque converter to provide cooling and the only access port we are aware of is on the passenger side front of the case below the first/reverse band adjustment screw. This port was used by technicians for diagnosis as a pressure test connection. Adding a cooler line there might result in insufficient operating pressure inside the valve body, given the additional plumbing and distance the fluid would have to travel out and back. There is a second hole on the rear of the case that simply drains back into the pan, which could technically be used as the location for a return line, but we would not recommend adding a cooler unless you also change to a non-finned converter and a valve body from an externally cooled transmission. Another alternative is to locate a Ford truck OE-style external cooler, which mounted on a bracket attached to the passenger side of the bellhousing in 1955 and newer truck transmissions. Radiator coolant was plumbed back to this cooler, which was basically an extra loop that ran around the outside of the add-on cooler unit. A picture of the cooler is seen in the 1955 Ford-O-Matic manual on page 5, picture #5344. Dave Edwards at AutoTran could possibly locate one for you.*

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781-449-2065 • autotran.us

All discussions in this column regarding repairs, conversions, parts swaps, etc. are offered as suggestions. Performing any such work should be accompanied by thorough research to verify proper parts compatibility and procedures to achieve a safe, functional result.

We welcome any and all questions related to suspension, brake, engine, differential and transmission upgrades.

Email us at swapmeet@hemmings.com or submit inquiries to our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/HemmingsNews or our website where comments can be made at the bottom of dozens of previous Swap Meet articles posted there.

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GEAR

By Mark J. McCourt

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Challenger

CHALLENGER NEON SIGN

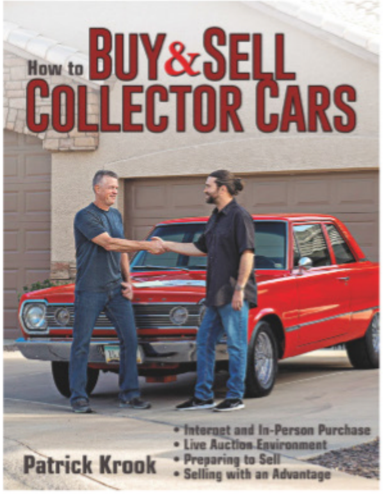
SUMMIT RACING EQUIPMENT • 800-230-3030
SUMMITRACING.COM • $209.99

Dodge's modern-day Challenger has become a verified legend in its own time. As this muscle coupe nears the end of its impressive 15-year production run, Summit Racing Equipment has begun offering a special tribute to the nameplate in the form of an officially licensed neon sign (item NNI-5SMCLG) bearing the car's classic script logo and red Dodge twin-stripe branding. Made by the neon experts at Neonetics, this indoor-use piece features hand-blown white glass tubing lit via industrial-strength transformers, mounted to a sturdy black metal base. Sized 28-inches long by 9-inches tall by 6-inches deep, it plugs into a household outlet and can be displayed sitting on a shelf or hanging against a wall or window in your den or garage. Note that, due to its large size, there's a $9.99 oversize shipping fee. This neon sign is a timelessly eye-catching, fun tribute to a car that shares those same attributes.

HOW TO BUY & SELL COLLECTOR CARS

CARTECH • 800-551-4754 • CARTECHBOOKS.COM/CT668 • $34.95

Some revel in the thrill of the hunt, eagerly anticipating the *tête-à-tête* of bargaining; nerves and uncertainty can affect others as they consider the costs and technicalities of acquiring or selling a special vehicle. Whether it's an in-person transaction or a virtual one, this important exchange leads to automotive joy or disappointment. Before you take those steps, it's wise to seek the counsel of a professional car trader like Patrick Krook, who authored this book for that very purpose. The generously illustrated 160-page softcover (ISBN 9781613255469) offers level-headed perspective on what can be an emotion-driven transaction. Krook suggests deciding how a vehicle will be used; considering factors like condition, originality, and documentation; and enlisting expert help when appropriate. He explains the positives and negatives of auctions, suggests the best way to present a vehicle for sale, and how to approach that sensitive topic of price. *How to Buy & Sell Collector Cars* should be required reading for anyone considering entering or exiting our hobby.


How to BUY&SELL COLLECTOR CARS
Patrick Krook
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• Live Auction Environment
• Preparing to Sell
• Selling with an Advantage

1967 FORD MUSTANG SHELBY G.T. 350

HEMMINGS • 800-227-4373 X79550 • HEMMINGS.COM/STORE • $114.99

It's been more than 56 years since Ford debuted the second-generation Shelby G.T. 350, based on its bestselling Mustang fastback and stuffed full of power and attitude. That Shelby, which continues to influence Mustang styling and performance to this day, has been commemorated as an officially licensed 1:18 scale die-cast model by Auto World. This display-worthy collectible (item AMM1227) turns heads in Wimbledon White with gold striping. Its hood and doors open to reveal a lifelike 289-cu.in. V-8 with accurate rocker covers and air-cleaner badging, plus a black, four-speed interior with a woodgrain wheel, legible gauges, and flock carpeting. Authentic Shelby logos are reproduced on the steering wheel boss, gas cap, wheel centers, and more. More detail is seen when you turn it over to inspect the undercarriage with its factory-correct overspray covering red oxide primer. It's an artful piece sure to appeal to every fast Ford fan.

2023
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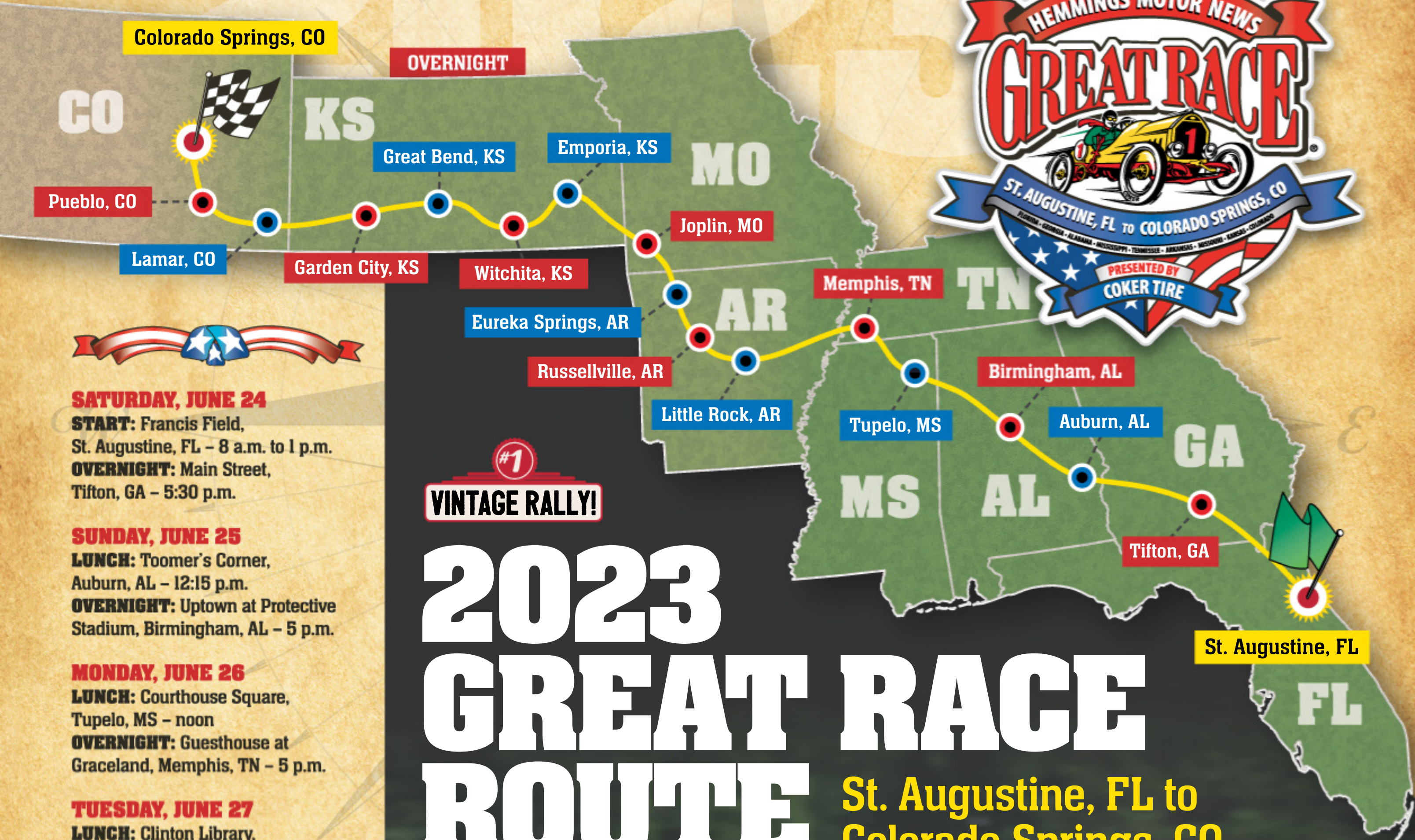
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FL

SATURDAY, JUNE 24
START: Francis Field,
St. Augustine, FL – 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Main Street,
Tifton, GA – 5:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, JUNE 25
LUNCH: Toomer's Corner,
Auburn, AL – 12:15 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Uptown at Protective
Stadium, Birmingham, AL – 5 p.m.

MONDAY, JUNE 26
LUNCH: Courthouse Square,
Tupelo, MS – noon
OVERNIGHT: Guesthouse at
Graceland, Memphis, TN – 5 p.m.

TUESDAY, JUNE 27
LUNCH: Clinton Library,
Little Rock, AR – 11:45 a.m.
OVERNIGHT: Russellville Depot,
Russellville, AR – 5 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28
LUNCH: Community Center,
Eureka Springs, AR – 12:15 p.m.
OVERNIGHT: Main Street downtown,
Joplin, MO – 5 p.m.

THURSDAY, JUNE 29
LUNCH: Commercial Street,
Emporia, KS – noon
OVERNIGHT: Old Town,
Wichita, KS – 5 p.m.

FRIDAY, JUNE 30
LUNCH:: Courthouse Square,
Great Bend, KS – noon
OVERNIGHT: Main Street at Stevens
Park, Garden City, KS – 5 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 1
LUNCH: Colorado Welcome Center,
Lamar, CO – 11:45 a.m.
OVERNIGHT: Pueblo Union Depot,
Pueblo, CO – 5 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 2
FINISH: Tejon Street,
Colorado Springs, CO – 1 p.m.

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By Tom Comerro

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CHRYSLER BIG-BLOCK ROCKER SCIENCE

PROFORM • PROFORMPARTS.COM • $419.99-$458.99

Reduce the internal friction in your big-block Chrysler with these new aluminum shaft-mount roller rocker arms. In addition to increased horsepower, these rocker arm kits can lengthen valvetrain component life and reduce wear on your valve-stem tips. Each rocker is designed and made for optimum consistency and ratio accuracy with an appealing anodized finish emblazoned with the Mopar emblem. The bronze bushings provide a friction-free pivot point for the rockers, and also allow oil to come up through the shaft underneath each bushing. Also included are pushrod tips, which allow for precise lash adjusting; hardened shafts; and spacer hardware. Keep in mind that the mounting hardware is not included, as each kit is made to use your stock bolts and tabs to attach the shaft to the cylinder head. Available in 1.6:1 and 1.7:1 ratio shaft-mount styles. Available at various distributors. Ask about p/n 440-468 (1.6) and 440-873 (1.7) for more details.

WHEEL STUDS

AUTOMOTIVE RACING PRODUCTS • 805-339-2200 • ARP-BOLTS.COM • $42.99

Top-quality replacement wheel studs are now available for more factory and aftermarket applications than ever with the latest expansion of ARP's product line. The latest addition includes these ½-20-thread bolts with an under-head length of 1.950 inches. These screw-in studs (p/n 100-7738) will work for most aftermarket axles and are made from 8740 chrome-moly steel. They are also heat-treated to a nominal tensile strength of 190,000 psi and cadmium-plated for extra strength and durability. The threads are also stronger as they are rolled instead of cut, reducing the overall thread fatigue. Other screw-in studs are available up to 3.470 inches, covering a variety of applications, including meeting the requirements of racing associations that require the stud to stick out from the lug nut the same distance as its diameter. Go to arp-bolts.com for application details.

LATE-MODEL FORD CLUTCH KITS

CENTERFORCE • 928-771-8422 • CENTERFORCE.COM • $1,844.39

Centerforce's DYAD DS 10.4-inch twin-disc clutch and flywheel kits are now available for late-model Fords. The clutches have a holding capacity of 500 to 1,300 ft-lbs of torque while the pressure plate is designed with a centrifugal weight system for improved clamp load coupled with ball-bearing technology to provide lighter pedal effort. The clutches are also equipped with a lightened billet-steel flywheel and are match balanced for maximum performance and quicker revs. The kits include the clutch cover, clutch discs, floater, flywheel, bolts, pilot bearing, and alignment tool. Call about your specific application.

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2008 Dodge Magnum SRT8
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1972 Chevrolet Corvette LT1
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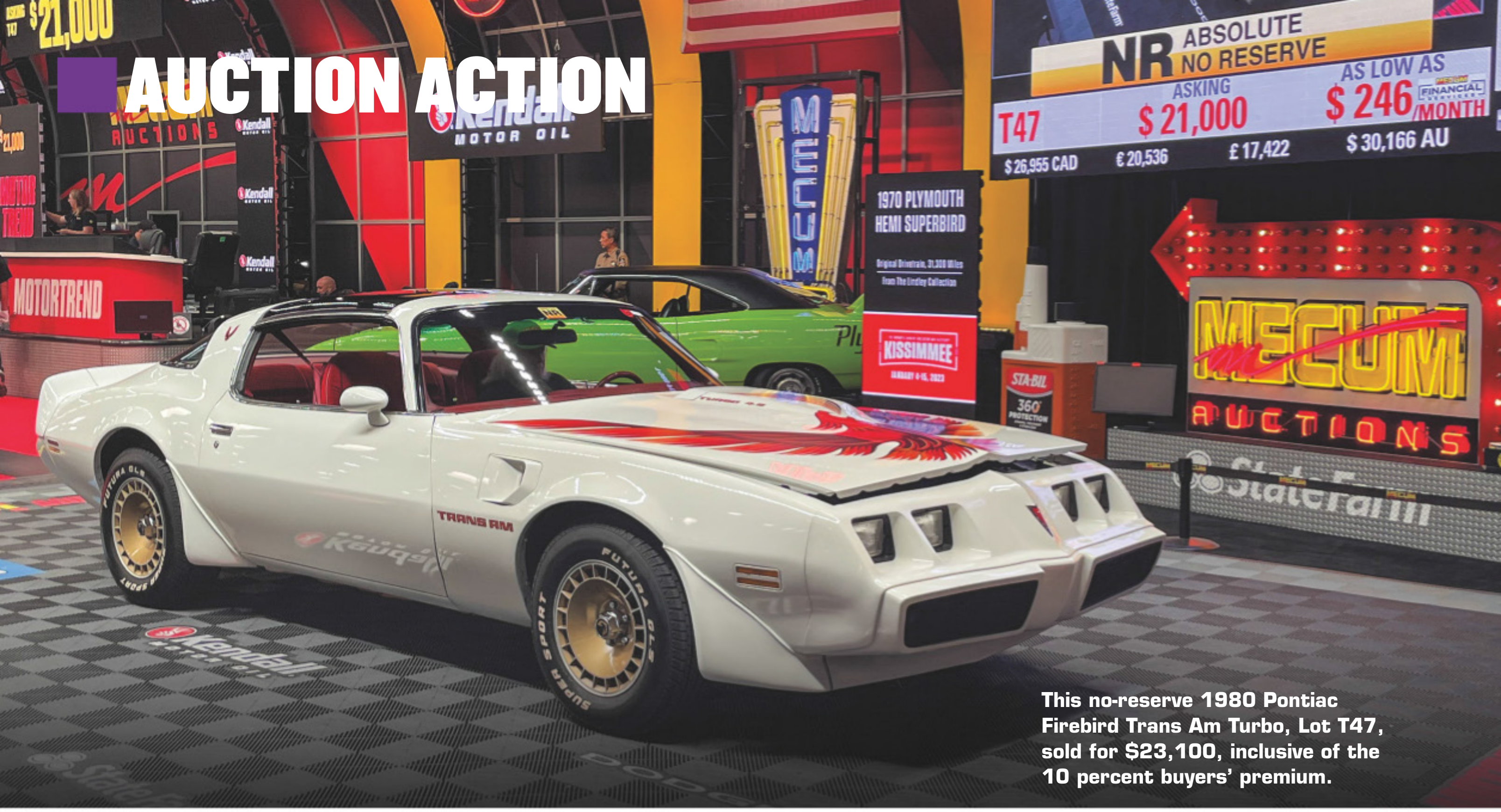


This no-reserve 1980 Pontiac Firebird Trans Am Turbo, Lot T47, sold for $23,100, inclusive of the 10 percent buyers' premium.

MECUM AUCTIONS, LAS VEGAS

A HOUSE-RECORD $27.5 MILLION HEATS THINGS UP AS THE DESERT COOLS OFF

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH

DO ECONOMIC HICCUPS have everyone aflutter? Not in Vegas, man. Another Sin City car auction, another record: Mecum's extravaganza in the North Hall of the Las Vegas Convention Center in November 2022 took in a house-record $27.5 million over three days. This trampled their previous Vegas high by more than $2.25 million and topped the 2021 event by a whopping $5.2 million. Las Vegas in November isn't nearly as sweltering as it is in, say, July... but clearly the action on the car auction block is plenty hot.

Timing may be key to the house's success: Mecum holds two annual events in the Southwest: this one in November and another in Glendale, Arizona—just 300 miles away—in late March. With two events in relatively close proximity, it makes sense that they're staggered roughly half a year apart on the calendar. The result? Record sales at both of Mecum's events in the region this year.

With 796 lots available at the three-day event, the 205 not-sold cars made for a fairly healthy 74.25-percent sell-through. And, while the average sale was north of $46,000, that means that there were plenty of interesting cars that sold well below this figure.

Fully half of the weekend's Top Ten was comprised of cars manufactured in the current millennium, with four of those five built in the last five years. The top American seller at the event was a 2006 Ford GT Heritage Edition (Lot S89.1) selling for $434,500, which placed it second in the overall sales tally; third place was bestowed upon the first of two top-ten muscle-era mischief makers, a 1969 Dodge Daytona (Lot S121.1) that sold for $418,000 (a vehicle that we will look at in further detail elsewhere in this report). All prices include the 10 percent buyers' premium.

THE NUMBERS

Total Sales: $27.5 million
Sell-Through: 74.25 percent
Top Muscle Car Sale:
1969 Dodge Daytona, $418,000
Average Sale: $46,531

UPCOMING AUCTIONS

Date: March 28-April 1, 2023: Glendale, AZ
Contact: mecum.com

LEGEND

Condition: #1 = Excellent; #2 = Very Good; #3 = Average; #4 = Poor; #5 = Major Project

Reserve: Minimum price owner will accept

High Bid: The highest offer made (but vehicle did not sell) *

Selling Price: What the vehicle sold for *

Average Selling Price: Average market value of vehicles in similar condition

* All prices shown for sold lots include the buyer's premium of 10 percent. Unsold lots include only the highest bid, when available.

1982 FORD

MODEL: Mustang GT
CONDITION: Original/#1-
RESERVE: Undisclosed
SELLING PRICE: $27,500
AVG. SELLING PRICE: $14,000

Ford timed its Mustang GT to coincide with the introduction of the third-gen GM F-body, thus kicking off a horsepower war that we are still enjoying today. This example, an unrestored five-speed 5.0-liter with barely 20,000 miles showing on the odometer, was claimed to have but a single owner from new. It even had new metric Michelin TRX tires on the original wheels, rather than newer 16-inch lookalikes. No radio was specified, but it had air conditioning. Sale price after the buyers' premium was nearly double book; it sounds high now, but in a few years it may look like money well-spent.

1993 PONTIAC

MODEL: Firebird Trans Am
CONDITION: Original/#1-
RESERVE: Undisclosed
HIGH BID: $12,000 (not sold)
AVG. SELLING PRICE: $16,000

This example looked like it drove straight out of 1995: just 41,000 miles on the odometer, no nose rash to speak of, and well-optioned with A/C, tilt wheel, cruise, power windows and locks, and an AM/FM tape deck. On the one hand, an automatic transmission doesn't represent the ultimate hot F-body like the six-speed stick did, but on the other hand, who knows? The automatic may have saved this car from a life of abuse. Alas, collectors of hot cars often enjoy the shift-it-yourself option, and average-retail pricing meant that this nicer-than-average T/A went home with its seller.

1970 CHEVROLET

MODEL: El Camino SS
CONDITION: Restored/#2
RESERVE: Undisclosed
SELLING PRICE: $45,100
AVG. SELLING PRICE: $58,000

Color us confused. Everything about this Canadian-built '70 El Camino SS seemed right. It was clean, it had a big-block, it was nicely optioned (gauges, tilt wheel, power steering and brakes, fiber-optics)... and it was advertising an obviously-not-original 425-horsepower 427 under the hood. The fender badges showed 454, but had they from day one? (We'll overlook signage boasting of one brand of tire while another was clearly called out on the sidewalls in white letters; things can change after committing to auction and before a sale, but they were radials regardless.) And so, we have another vehicle that presented nicer-than-average, selling for less than average money. That's honesty for you.

1962 CHEVROLET

MODEL: Bel Air
CONDITION: Restored/#1-
RESERVE: Undisclosed
SELLING PRICE: $58,300
AVG. SELLING PRICE: $65,000

A lot was said about this car on the window writeup — codes for engine, close-ratio four-speed, et al, clear down to the generator — but little was offered about the actual history of the car itself. That said, the engine was advertised as a numbers-matching 409/409 that has gone just 100 miles since its rebuild. The original Ermine White body was said to be untouched, although it looked pretty fresh to our eyes, and the only non-period item we detected was a set of modern radials. Here, a nicer-than-average presentation sold for almost bang-on average retail.

1969 CHEVROLET

MODEL: Chevelle SS 300 Deluxe
CONDITION: Restored/#1
RESERVE: Undisclosed
HIGH BID: $95,000 (not sold)
AVG. SELLING PRICE: $24,000

We all know that Chevelle Super Sports are based on Malibus, right? Well, we'd like to introduce you to this one-year-only, Canadian-built, Chevelle 300 Deluxe-based SS, documented with GM of Canada paperwork. It was sold new at Berger Chevrolet in Grand Rapids, Michigan. What's here, as far as we could tell, appeared perfect and as-new. The $24,000 high retail listed above for a 300 Deluxe SS is clearly way off; a #1 condition '69 Chevelle Super Sport with these options is a six-figure car, which is more in line with the reality of the market.

1970 FORD

MODEL: Mustang Boss 302
CONDITION: Restored/#1
RESERVE: Undisclosed
HIGH BID: $70,000 (not sold)
AVG. SELLING PRICE: $195,000

Restored five years ago. Matching-numbers engine. Shaker scoop. Acapulco Blue. Documentation from the original owner including a handwritten logbook listing mileage and services performed. There were also restoration photos included. With Boss 302s booking for near-enough $200,000 in this one's condition, it made us wonder why it was only bid to just over a third of the going rate. What did we miss? Was it being third in a line of four consecutive muscle-era Mustangs rolling over the transom? Did the non-Mustang-fans' eyes glaze over? Somehow, this one went home with the seller.

1972 FORD

MODEL: Mustang
CONDITION: Refurbished/#2
RESERVE: None
SELLING PRICE: $66,000
AVG. SELLING PRICE: $50,000

A wild one here. This is one of 336 R-code 351 HO Mustang fastbacks built for 1972; the Marti Report documented this as a Ford test vehicle that should have been crushed but somehow slipped out the back door. A former Ford test engineer owned it for almost 40 years, and the odometer showed less than 13,000 miles. But along with myriad mechanical and trim refreshes, it had been repainted a 2020 Corvette shade of white, the engine has been treated to a brace of aftermarket components, and the freshly redone engine compartment was littered with stickers. Still, it sold for 15 percent above the average.

1970 DODGE

MODEL: Challenger R/T
CONDITION: Restored/#1-
RESERVE: None
SELLING PRICE: $71,500
AVG. SELLING PRICE: $90,000

Panther Pink and perfect! Or was it? Set aside the staggered-width Rallye wheels and white-letter radials for a moment. Last we heard, you couldn't get a 440 Six Pack with air conditioning in 1970; this car had both. And so, beyond looking perfect (and beyond us getting a gander at the fender tag, which we didn't get to do), what was the story here? Factory big-block car? Factory Six Pack with A/C added? Was it even factory pink? (It was certainly pink on auction day, including floorpans that were as shiny as the topside.) It sold for between average and high retail for a real 440-powered R/T.

1969 PONTIAC

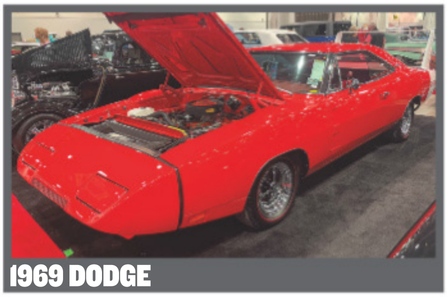
MODEL: GTO
CONDITION: Refurbished/#2
RESERVE: Undisclosed
SELLING PRICE: $62,700
AVG. SELLING PRICE: $70,000

We always worry when the paperwork for a car includes a list of what's on board (power steering/disc brakes/windows/top; air conditioning) and nothing about how it was lovingly owned by a single family for years, or how it was discovered stuffed in a garage under a pile of discarded grade-school science projects. We know that it was delivered in Reno and had some driveline work done in Oregon in 2021, but little else beyond that. A PHS Historic Services report would have doubtless helped verify (or dispute?) what was here. There's no shame in a sale price within 15 percent of the average.

1965 PLYMOUTH

MODEL: Satellite
CONDITION: Modified/#2
RESERVE: Undisclosed
HIGH BID: $30,000 (not sold)
AVG. SELLING PRICE: $19,000

As a street machine, this '65 Satellite (the top-of-the-line Belvedere model for the year) looked like terrific fun: the 440 under the hood was treated to both aluminum heads and a Max Wedge-type cross-ram intake, mag wheels, front disc brakes, a brace of gauges nestled into the console and hanging below the dash … and an AM radio with a pair of 6x9s punched through the parcel shelf. High retail for a dead-mint example is around $25,000; we suspect the seller was trying to recoup much of what he (over?) spent building it.



1969 DODGE

MODEL: Charger Daytona
CONDITION: Restored/#1-
RESERVE: Undisclosed
SELLING PRICE: $418,000
AVG. SELLING PRICE: $250,000

Well, here's the belle of the ball for Mecum's Las Vegas event. Restored in 2016 and shown at a MCACN Invitational display, it was a broadcast-sheet-verified, red-on-red, 440/four-speed Daytona with A33 Track Pak, AM radio, and precious little else. The redline tires were radials, which suggests the seller prized drivability over pure correctness. Everything presented as new — not freshly restored, which can sometimes go overboard on glossy finishes and such — this looked as it would have rolled out of the dealer's showroom. The sale price blew past the high-average book value by 60 percent — a not inconsiderable margin.

1977 CHEVROLET

MODEL: Camaro Z28
CONDITION: Restored/#1-
RESERVE: Undisclosed
SELLING PRICE: $20,900
AVG. SELLING PRICE: $19,000

Chevy's late second-gen Z28 Camaro has been value-lagging behind its Pontiac Trans Am sibling for a while now, so it was intriguing to see one sell for north of 20 grand. This clean automatic example listed a litany of replaced trim items and the result looked clean and fresh; the listing didn't mention new paint, which looked fairly fresh to us as well. This one sold exactly on book value, not including the 10 percent buyers' fee. Air conditioning added a whopping 10 percent to the bottom line.

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AUCTION NEWS

By Tom Comerro

MECUM AUCTIONS

MECUM KANSAS CITY AND KISSIMMEE

Mecum Auctions has concluded its 2022 finale in Kansas City as well as its 12-day curtain raiser for 2023, the Kissimmee, Florida, auction. The Kansas City auction realized a sell-through of 74.5 percent in the era of American muscle and performance cars with total sales reaching more than $3.3 million. Among them were 15 low-mileage examples of the C4 Corvette, ranging from 1984 to 1996. Each of the fourth-generation Corvettes was finished in red with mileage as low as 9,825 clicks; none showed above 27,293 miles. The high sale among this group was a 1994 ZR-1 (pictured), one of 448 made that year. Its interior was adorned with black leather, and it came with the build sheet and window sticker. Showing only 11,676 miles on the odometer, it changed hands for $39,600.

Results from the gargantuan Kissimmee sale are in and once again Mecum set a new event record. Of the 4,000 cars that crossed the block, 3,180 sold for a grand total of $234 million. The 4,000th car, incidentally, was a 1969 Ford Mustang Boss 429 that did not sell, though the Candy Apple Red 'Stang reached a high bid of $275,000.

The top muscle car to sell was a 1969 Dodge Charger Daytona with the 426 Hemi engine. It's believed to be the lowest-mileage original engine four-speed Hemi Daytona documented with only 6,490 miles. It underwent a thorough restoration by Roger Gibson, down to the correct factory markings on the undercarriage after its life as an ISCA-level custom. Finished in copper metallic (and thought to be the only one) with a white wing stripe, it was complemented by a tan interior and has made the rounds at Amelia Island and the St. John's Concours events. It also had a diverse lineage of owners including *Los Angeles Times* owner Otis Chandler, former NFL linebacker Kevin Greene, and actor David Spade, who played the fictional Hemi hero "Joe Dirt" in the 2001 movie of the same name. When the final bid came through, the Dodge sold for $1.43 million. All results from Kansas City and Kissimmee are now available at mecum.com.

APRIL EVENTS

2	**Sumter Swap Meet** Bushnell, Florida • 727-848-7171
9	**Long Beach Hi-Performance Swap Meet** Long Beach, California • 800-762-9785
13-15	**Mecum Auctions** Houston, Texas • 262-275-5050
13-15	**Barrett-Jackson Auction** Palm Beach, Florida • 480-421-6694
13-16	**AACA Charlotte AutoFair** Concord, North Carolina • 704-841-1990
14-16	**Englishtown Swap Meet** Old Bridge, New Jersey • 732-446-5154
16	**Pomona Swap Meet** Pomona, California • 714-538-7091
19-23	**Spring Carlisle** Carlisle, Pennsylvania • 717-243-7855
21-22	**Branson Auction** Branson, Missouri • 800-335-3063
21-22	**Vicari Auction** Biloxi, Missouri • 504-264-2277
28-29	**Worldwide Auction** Auburn, Indiana • 260-925-6789
28-30	**Spring Jefferson Car Show & Swap Meet** Jefferson, Wisconsin • 608-244-8416
27-29	**Pate Swap Meet** Fort Worth, Texas • 817-396-5118

Please note that these events are active as of press time. We recommend you verify the status before making plans to attend.

BARRETT-JACKSON

UP NEXT

A busy month starts off with Barrett-Jackson holding its Palm Beach auction at the South Florida Fairgrounds in West Palm Beach, Florida. Last year, after returning from a two-year hiatus, this sale saw more than $59 million in total sales and 676 vehicles changing hands. This year's auction will take place April 13-15; visit barrett-jackson.com for more information.

Vicari and Branson auction houses will both hold sales on April 21-22. Vicari returns to Biloxi, Mississippi, with the auction taking place at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center with up to 500 cars expected to cross the block. Meanwhile Branson returns to the Branson Convention Center. Last year's auction had more than 100 cars cross the block with the top selling muscle car being a 1969 Camaro equipped with an LS2 engine and Tremec five-speed transmission. The customized Camaro sold for $103,455. For the latest consignments, visit vicariauction.com and bransonauction.com.

Finally, Worldwide Auctioneers wraps up the month with its Enthusiast Auction scheduled for April 28-29. The auction will take place at Worldwide's headquarters in Auburn, Indiana, and more than 400 lots of vehicles and automobilia will be available for bidding. Visit worldwideauctioneers.com for details.

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1969 AMC JAVELIN

RESERVE: $25,000
SELLING PRICE: $29,400

RECENT MARKET RANGE:
$21,500-$30,250

The first-gen Javelin is one of the lesser-seen, yet more interesting, of the late-Sixties pony cars. This one was built with numerous desirable modifications that enhanced its period vibe. Some blemishes were noted in the Willow Green-painted body, but it turned heads with the black stripes, simulated side-pipe rocker trims, and Torq Thrust wheels; the black interior was recently refreshed, and the original steering wheel came with the car. The performance-built 290-cu.in. V-8 was mated to a Hurst-shifted four-speed and limited-slip differential, and the entire driveline was said to operate properly. With fine presentation, it wasn't surprising this AMC shot to the top of its market range.

2017 FORD MUSTANG SHELBY GT350

RESERVE: $52,000
SELLING PRICE: $57,750

RECENT MARKET RANGE:
$49,110-$67,350

From its introduction, the S550-gen Shelby GT350 was a desirable sports car for its razor-sharp handling and sonorous, flat-plane-crank engine. This 2017 example was virtually new, with little over 3,300 miles on its odometer. The mega-Mustang's condition was called "excellent," with no reported blemishes or rust in the body, and a like-new interior sporting Recaro seats, an Alcantara-wrapped wheel, and white-striped red knob for the six-speed manual that matched the paint. The 526-hp, 5.2-liter "Voodoo" V-8 and Magneride suspension promised faultless operation, while factory-installed Michelin Pilots wrapped unmarred 19-inch alloys. Before too long, the hammer price will seem a bargain.

1965 PONTIAC GRAND PRIX

RESERVE: $21,000
SELLING PRICE: $29,400

RECENT MARKET RANGE:
$18,700-$28,500

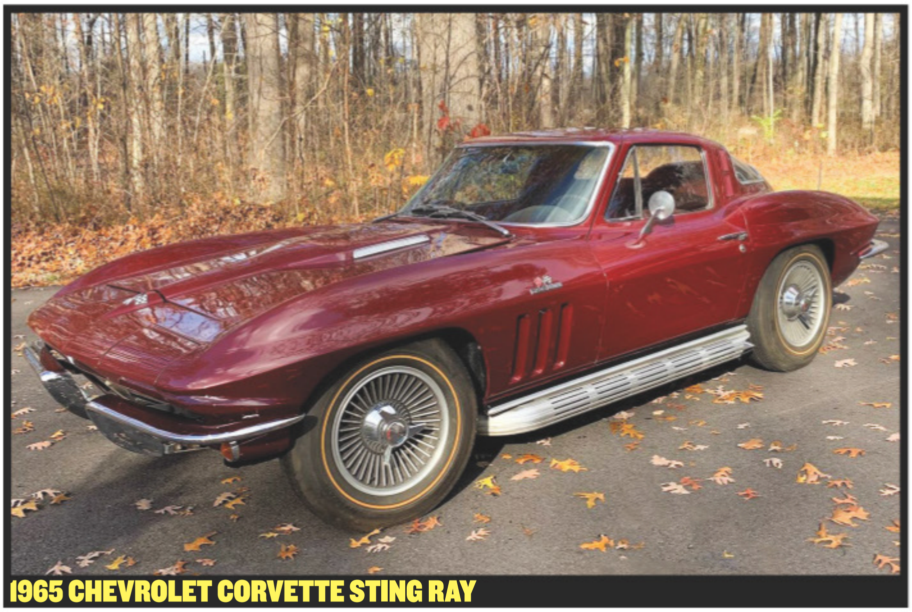
Less than 50,000 miles had passed under the tires of this single-family-owned 1965 Grand Prix before it successfully crossed Hemmings Auctions' virtual block. Its seller had a substantial amount of work done to the car including rust removal and body repaint in Cameo Ivory, replacing the driver's seat springs and foam while keeping the unusual factory Plum Morrokide upholstery, and rebuilding the 389-cu.in. V-8 with Holley fuel injection. This Pontiac presented very nicely, with replated bumpers, R134A-converted A/C, Bluetooth added to the original radio, and recently restored wheels. With great, known provenance, it was no surprise to see this stylish full-size coupe exceed its average value.

LEGEND

RESERVE: Minimum price owner will accept

SELLING PRICE*: What the vehicle sold for, inclusive of buyer's 5-percent fee (*sold as a Make Offer listing following the live auction)

RECENT MARKET RANGE: The low-to-high value range for the vehicle based on published results of similar vehicles sold at auction over the previous 18 months



1965 CHEVROLET CORVETTE STING RAY

RESERVE: $52,000
SELLING PRICE: $72,975

RECENT MARKET RANGE:
$49,240-$67,550

A tick more than 70,000 miles registered on this Sting Ray coupe, which advertised its 425-hp, 396-cu.in. Turbo-Jet V-8 by the shape of its bulging hood and by its crossed-flag fender emblems. That desirable engine was paired with a close-ratio four-speed manual, Positraction 4.11 rear axle, side exhausts, and knock-off alloys. The window sticker showed this Corvette's particulars, and its seller called the older base/clear paint a "five-footer" in condition, also divulging a few bumper blemishes. The maroon interior appeared nice and the chassis was clean. Six videos and detailed photos showed why it took four time extensions and no fewer than 27 bids to sell the car over market range.

1987 FORD THUNDERBIRD SPORT V-8

RESERVE: $16,000
SELLING PRICE: $16,748*

RECENT MARKET RANGE:
$12,800-$20,750

The mileage and condition of this 1987 Thunderbird Sport were almost unbelievable, because the Ford traveled fewer than 77 miles per year since it left the showroom. It was purchased new as a collector car, and its only alterations were a Motorcraft dual-exhaust system, R-134 A/C conversion, and replacement tires (the factory originals were saved). The 'Bird's paint was called "perfect" and its blue cloth interior was said to be in "like-new condition." Careful storage meant this coupe had a nearly spotless undercarriage, although one exhaust pipe was rusted; no problems were divulged with its 5.0-liter V-8 and four-speed automatic. The winning Make Offer bid represented a very good buy.

2000 CHEVROLET CORVETTE

RESERVE: $15,000
SELLING PRICE: $16,800

RECENT MARKET RANGE:
$13,000-$22,000

The debut of the automatic-only, supercar-adjacent mid-engine C8 Corvette put recent prior generations in a new light, including the C5; those turn-of-the-century 'Vettes, like this convertible, were everyday-usable with approachable performance and great economy. This '00 had a rebuilt V-8 with performance modifications, plus a fresh clutch for its Hurst-shifted six-speed. The factory paint had a few blemishes, but the soft top was called "excellent," and the black leather interior looked good; a gas-gauge problem was noted, as was a fault with the tire-pressure monitoring system. A video showed the Chevy in motion, and documentation included dyno results. It had great bang for the buck.

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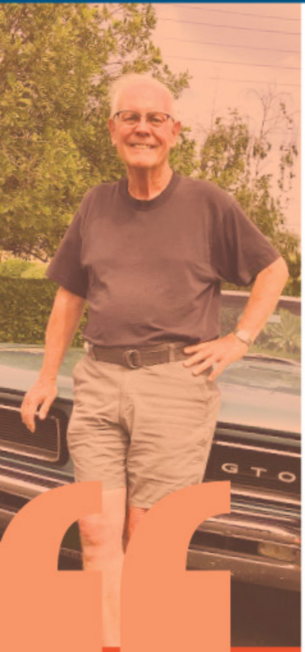

Predicting the Future?

I was talking with some old friends recently when one of them brought up a question that probably has been on many of our minds. Simply put, he wanted to know, "What does the future hold for our hobby?" He reminded a few of us that we are not getting any younger, despite how we may feel. Well, I thought about that for the first time in quite a while and looked for some comparisons from the past. I realized that since the beginning of the automotive age, there have been car-related groups that kept the old cars popular with their particular age group. It's obvious that is currently the case with our Sixties muscle machines.

There are huge clubs across the nation — and all over the world — for Ford's Model T and Model A, for the behemoth Fifties cruisers, and of course, for our Sixties/Seventies muscle machines. Let's not forget all the associations dedicated to import cars, which also trace back many years, thanks in part to all the newly minted sports car enthusiasts returning home after World War II. Today, there are clubs for the various forms of later-model "pocket rocket" performance vehicles, both domestic and imported, currently available on the market.

This is not a current trend, no matter where you live. The love for smaller high-performance vehicles has been around since the first horse was attached to a wagon. Wagon racing was popular long before the internal combustion engine was invented. Vehicular competition is in our genes, regardless of where we live or how old we are. Competition of one kind or another, be it vehicle racing or physical sports, is part of us and hopefully always will be!

So, it really comes down to humans loving competition of all kinds, not just sports as we know it. I remember when I was growing up there was competition between grammar school students to write the best essay on a certain subject. Usually the winner received a small, golden plastic statue holding up a flaming torch. Nothing special, but it was a thrill for the young winner just the same. Is it really any different now? The thrill of winning holds allure for all of us with the slightest touch of competitive blood. And we're exposed to this competition at a very young age. Hence, our competitive spirit when we became adult muscle car lovers.

This leads me to the title of this column. Can we really predict the future of our hobby? I believe we can. How, you may ask? Well, I've heard from many of my car buddies who have teenagers in their households, and most of them are definitely into the muscle car scene. Not necessarily because of their parents, but because they genuinely enjoy being around these vehicles, and have already decided what brand and model they want to own. I'm sure you have seen some of these young enthusiasts at shows. Often there are at least two walking the show together, discussing the pros and cons of the vehicles that they favor. These examples don't seem isolated, and I take it as a strong sign of the interest among younger generations in the original muscle cars, even among some who are not yet old enough to legally drive. I feel this is a good indication that the future of the hobby is alive and well in our young enthusiasts.

My only concern is that the cost of buying and maintaining a Sixties muscle machine might be too taxing for a young person to deal with; this often appears to be the only thing standing in the way of the hobby spreading to new generations. It's an obstacle, but one that we all have had to face on some level. Hopefully, future enthusiasts will be able to overcome this hurdle and keep the hobby thriving. I've noticed many younger fans of the muscle era gravitating to examples of '60s and '70s cars that might not have qualified as true muscle machines in the past; of course, classic pickups have long been adjacent to the muscle car hobby, and that market is red hot these days. The appeal of the machines of the '60s and '70s is lasting, and clearly crosses generation gaps. I really don't think we have anything to worry about. ■

> "I take this as a sign that the future of the hobby is alive and well in our young enthusiasts."

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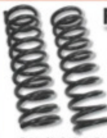

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